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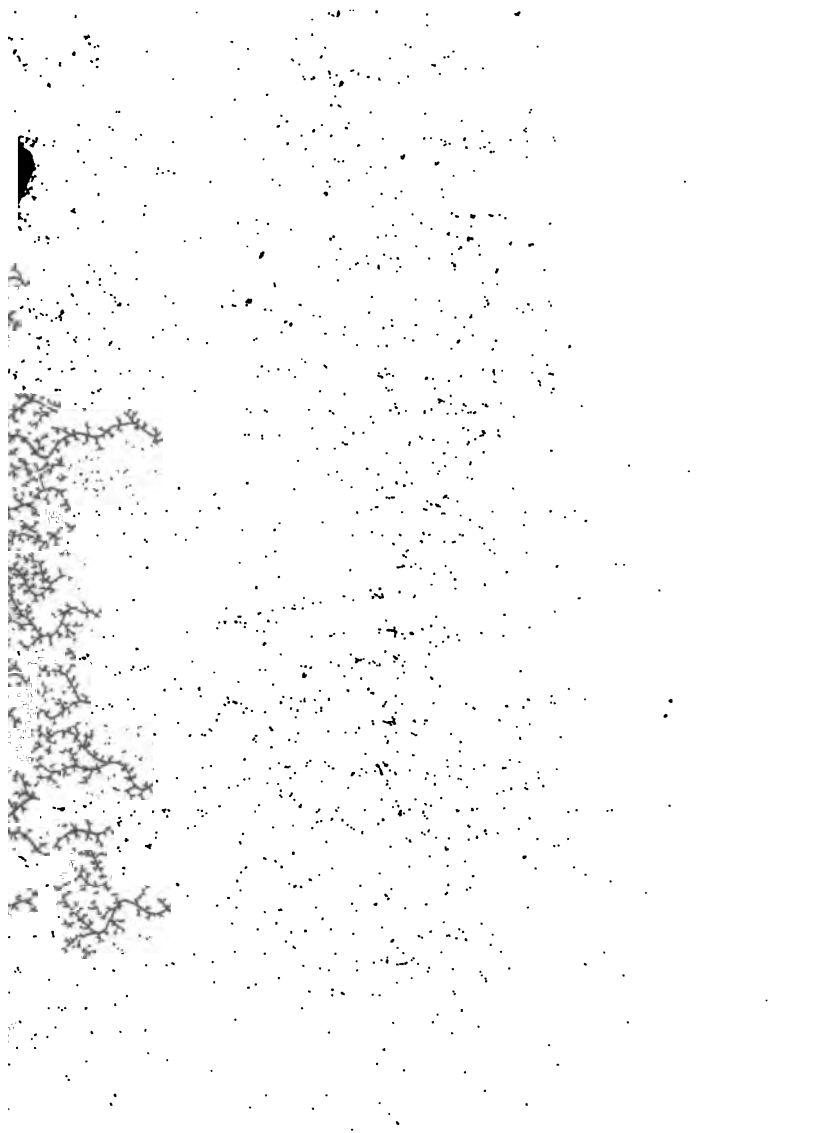
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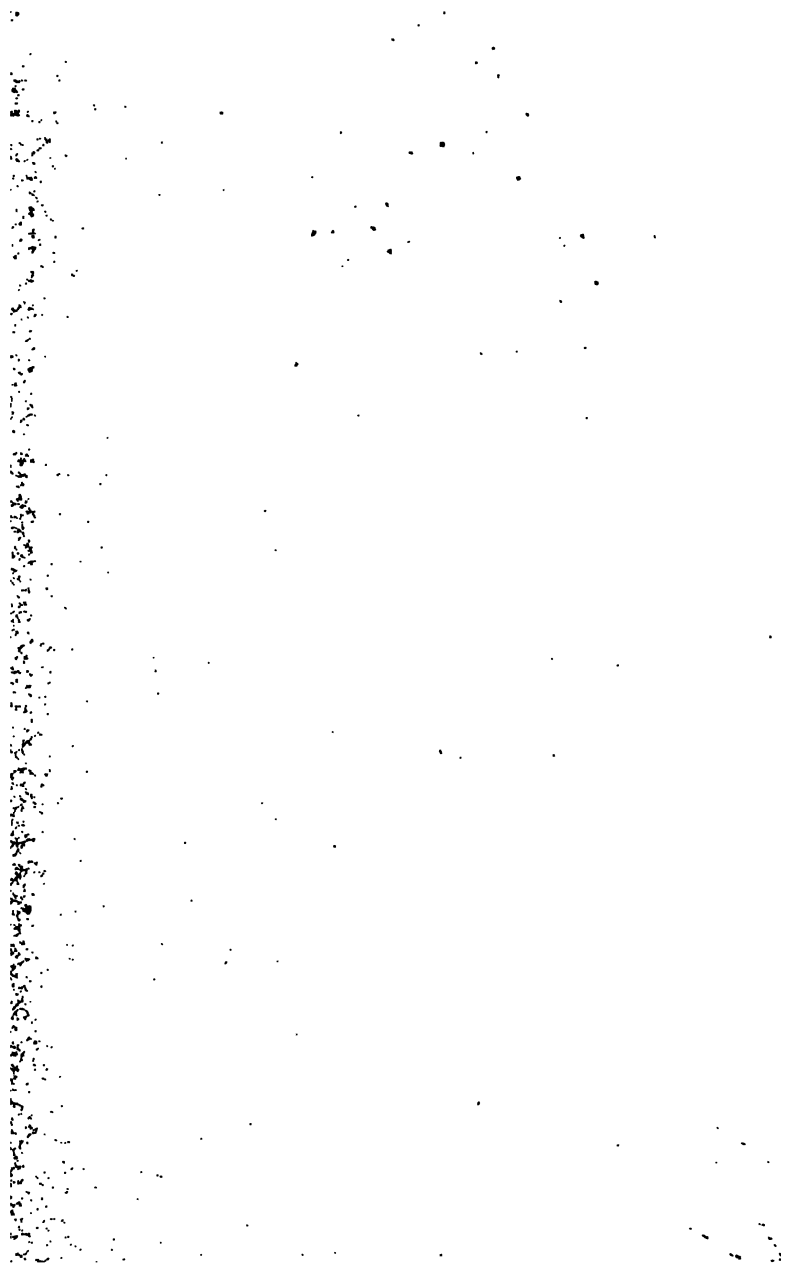
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HILDA AND I.

A STORY OF THREE LOVES.

BY

E. BEDELL BENJAMIN.

“It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.” *Scott.*



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GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

TO

SARAH BECK HARVEY

WHOSE FRIENDSHIP AND RARE GIFTS

HAVE BROUGHT ME SO MANY

HOURS OF PLEASURE.

WOLFE
JUN
1961

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HILDA AND I.

CHAPTER I.

I INTRODUCE MYSELF AND THE TWO VICTORS.



OMEWHERE near Long Island Sound stood the bright, cheery old place called Hartley Hall. It was old, and yet it looked new ; it was American, and yet it looked foreign ; it had bay windows and piazzas like any other country house, and yet porticos, belvideres and terraces unlike any that ever stood under the Stars and Stripes. The grounds held the same contrasts ; a part was elaborately laid out in quaint Italian style, while a large tract was purposely left wild and uncultivated, where Nature grouped and tangled according to her own fantastic fancy. The reason of the incongruities of the house was that through a series of generations it had been added to and altered to suit the needs or whims of its occupants, till what with wings, towers, bay windows and other architectural excrescences, it

became such an ill-arranged, unsightly mass of brick and stone that when my uncle returned from Italy to live in his boyhood's home, he looked at it in comic despair. His associations made him wish to touch it reverently. Rooms anywhere and everywhere, windows wherever there was anything or nothing to see, had their conveniences, but beauty and symmetry were a necessity of his nature; the want of them was like a touch upon an uncovered nerve, and the more he looked upon the ancestral heap, the more he felt he could not live in it. He grew grave when architects proposed rebuilding. He threw their plans in the fire, and worked over the problem himself. At last, *mamma* told me his face brightened as he decided on a compromise which would ornament without destroying the identity of the old place. He built a marble portico in the center of the front, extending it on each side in the form of a pillared walk, paved and roofed with marble; terraces filled spaces between projecting rooms; *belvederes* ornamented those of one story; flowers and vines covered unsightly corners, until the odds and ends of many minds grew into a "joy forever." Inside, he made a new entrance, turning one of the rooms into a circular hall, which was lined with marble, with stairways of the same material rising to a gallery above. Under this gallery an arch formed the entrance to the drawing-room. This arch was without doors, but heavily curtained. The other

rooms naturally developed from breakfast and dining-rooms, sitting-room and parlor, into morning-room, dining hall, drawing-room, statue gallery and conservatory, so that the old Hartley house became Hartley Hall, known widely for the kindly hospitalities that were lavished upon friends and neighbors by the silver-haired and golden-hearted genius of the place. My recollections only go back to the Hall as I have described it, for I was an infant when my uncle came home, and the changes were all made before I appreciated them. When I wondered why it was so unlike any other house, and likened its marble colonnades to great arms encircling it, mamma explained it all to me, calling it a type of my uncle's life—half Italian, half American. Why the larger half was Italian I learned later.

The grounds, the flowers, and fountains, the closely-shaven lawns and shaded shrubberies were beautiful in their perfection, but they never touched my heart. I lived most of my life in the wild tract known as the "Wilderness." There the little paths which no one knew as well as I were festooned and garlanded by a faultless artist; there the birds and I sang together in utter disregard of the great troublesome world outside. I was rather given to dreams and reveries, to personifications of what the uninitiated call "inanimate things." I over-estimated the sweet influences of Nature, but she and I were the

best of friends. I knew her seasons of rest, and when she laughed and sang. I knew when she tossed in stormy passion, and how she grieved when some forest giant was laid prostrate by the woodman's axe. I knew her joy when the spring mantled the woods with every exquisite coloring, and her pride when they were decked in the reckless extravagance of gold and crimson. I did not love people, conventionalities I thought were chains, and called them "shackles of society." So I dreamed away an idle, useless life, unconscious of its selfishness, unaroused to the knowledge that I was as undisciplined and ill-regulated a young person as it was possible for one to be, so sheltered from evil as I had ever been.

Through the woods there ran a winding stream, in which a little boat lay anchored for my use. In it I took many a dreamy excursion, passing under the overhanging branches of the great trees, and watching the silvering of the water when the sunlight penetrated the dense shade. There were no woodland mysteries hidden from me. I knew their speech and their language, and that solitude held no loneliness for one who heard their voices. A time came when this enjoyment ceased to suffice me—but that is part of my story.

My Bohemian life rather disturbed my uncle, but he thought it harmless, so he offered no reproaches, only watching lest some wish should be ungratified,

thus faithfully fulfilling a promise made to my dying father, that his wife and child should be his constant care. That care knew no weariness and hesitated at no trouble. When my wise mother said she preferred a home of her own to the grandeur of Hartley Hall, which was urged upon her, my uncle built for us a picturesque cottage, between the Hall and the Wilderness, giving us independence, while enjoying the freedom of all his possessions. I called the dogs and horses mine, rarely remembering that there was both a son and an adopted son in Europe, who, it might be supposed, would some time complete their studies and come to live with their father. Such remote contingencies did not trouble me. I was indulged in every fancy, and thought in all the wide world there could be nothing more beautiful than this my home.

One of the chief ornaments of the pleasure grounds was an artificial lake, connected by a small creek to the stream of which I have spoken; on the border of this lake stood a pavilion of pure white marble; a plated lamp of rich workmanship hung from its ceiling. Something my uncle once said of it had such an effect on the one good point in my character that I will repeat it: "I dislike the deception of that lamp," he said, "but I dare not hang a silver lamp outside, in this country, as I did in Italy." I did not know to what he referred, for his reticence in regard to his Italian experiences prevented our asking ex-

planations, but I was impressed by his love of truth. In myself this was so exaggerated that it almost ceased to be a virtue. I mowed down falsehood with a chariot armed with scythes, judging those around me with a rigidity that made even an affectation intolerable. It is a reminiscence of my childhood, that I positively hated my uncle's English housekeeper and butler. The first of these officials aggravated me by her overwhelming importance ; the very rustle of her dress, and the spotless purity of her kerchief were unendurable to me. As to the butler, it was many years before I could even think of him patiently ; he was grand and magnificent to a most oppressive degree, stepping and speaking so softly that I used to long for his foot to slip on the polished floor so that he might make one natural exclamation, or for his hand to shake as he poured out the priceless wines ; but in vain, he was a rock in his duties, and the softest of summer zephyrs in his mode of performing them. I learned finally to look through the "shows of things," and even came to know that Prescott's heart beat warmly and truly under his highly-polished exterior—but this, too, is part of my story.

One day I was reading upon a pile of Titan rocks, which I chose to fancy Juno had hurled there, when I saw, to my utter amazement, two young men on the other side of the stream, playing leap-frog. I could

make nothing else of their extraordinary performances and shouts of laughter. King, my pet dog, was with them, not barking in wild fury, as was his duty, but wagging his tail, and bounding about as if he gave his entire approval.

When I saw this specimen of gymnastics I was in a part of the Wilderness where I considered myself perfectly safe from intrusion. I rubbed my eyes to be sure I was awake. I satisfied myself it was no hallucination; then my wrath and I rose together, and I rushed home to tell mamma, and to ask what it could mean. Before I had gone far my uncle's sons flashed upon my mind, but these undignified boys could not be the young men, who, when they did come, I was sure would be grave and solemn, with all the wisdom of Heidelberg on their heads.

Mamma was standing on our vine-covered porch—I had time to think how beautiful she was—when she exclaimed, before I recovered my breath, “My daughter! I am so glad you are come. Your uncle has sent for us to dine to-day, *en grande tenue*, for his sons are here.”

“That explains it—they are nothing but absurd boys, playing *leap-frog*! Think of it, mamma, how childish! In *my* Wilderness too, and King, *my* dog, is with them.”

“If you are going to emphasize in that style,” she

said, laughing at my vehemence, "it is well the heir has come."

"If there is one being I detest more than another it is an heir, with his conscious pride and mock humility."

"Would you like this one better, my dear, if he began by announcing 'I am monarch of all I survey?'" laughed mamma; "but in truth your knowledge of heirs cannot be very extensive, we rarely use the word in America."

"Extensive or not, an heir is my pet aversion. I will not go to the dinner, for I think it is outrageous in uncle to bring these school-boys here so suddenly."

"He did not expect them for some months, but they followed his permission to come, without waiting. They arrived late last night. Here are their cards, left when we were both out this morning, V. R. Hartley and R. V. Hartley. It is absurd that I cannot tell which one is the real son. I have never seen them, you know. One is three years older than the other. The son is named Victor, after his father, so he must be the V. R. From the cards they seem to have the same names reversed. Bridget says both were dark, with 'shiny eyes,' and the taller of the two left the V. R., and had a 'burred' on his shoulder."

"What on earth is a 'burred'?"

"A dove, I fancy, from her description."

I could not help laughing at the incongruity of the

dove and the leap-frog, as well as the reversible names, but exclaimed, "I hate dark men ; I detest the name of Victor, and if V. R. owns the dove, it's too womanish for anything—I shall call him Victoria Regina."

"I would advise you to," said mamma composedly.

"I wish they were in Jerusalem !"

"My daughter !"

"Now, mamma, don't aggravate me; is it not enough to have my walks interfered with, the horses used, the dogs cajoled off, don't add to it that provoking tone which has all the commandments in it."

"You have a most exaggerated way of looking at things, Mildred," was all the reply this tirade elicited, as I stood contemplating the bits of pasteboard as if I read a fate in them. It vexatiously occurred to me just then, that I owed a debt of gratitude to my uncle for the life he had permitted me, that perhaps it was due from me to aid in making the summer pleasant for his sons, even if my delicious freedom were all over. Then the pomp and circumstance of the coming dinner also rose before me. It was impossible to deny a certain enjoyment in the entertainments with which my uncle beguiled the tedium of country life, particularly in the winter, when I could not live out of doors ; this dinner, with its new element, might be bearable ; I might at least try it, for my uncle's sake. I had a great admiration for him always, but having so far accepted all and given nothing, the admiration never softened into love. I

seemed on the border of a new life, a necessity for self-control was pressed upon me ; accustomed to ignore any wishes but my own, I had then a premonition that the time for such self-indulgence was ended. I made no good resolutions ; I was not repenting, but simply looking upon and accepting the inevitable. " I think I'll go to the dinner," came as a natural result of my self-communing. Mamma, having calmly taken this for granted, after a moment's pause proceeded to remark, " Your cardinal silk will do very well, with an overdress ; the day is quite cool, but the brown bow on it is preposterous."

" Nevertheless, a brown bow must be there."

" Why not tie your hair with cardinal ?"

" Because any one would do that. It must be tied with brown, to match my eyes. I will wear cream color."

" You look all one shade in that."

" That is because of my frightful hair. Tell me in which I look most hideous, and I will wear it."

" You are safe if you wear cardinal and brown. The combination is enough to give your uncle a chill," laughed mamma ; and just then one of the grooms came up with my horse, Black Beauty, whom I had ordered, but forgotten. The question of dress was left ; for I ran hastily to put on my habit, losing the little temper I had left, in an effort to restore my hair to order. It was a most troublesome possession,

long, thick, and curling. Crèped, it looked like a gigantic sponge; braided, the weight seemed doubled; combed loosely, it appeared to fill the room; and I informed mamma I felt like a pygmy sitting under a dead tree. According to the rules of fashion I could do nothing with it, though with the golden color no fault could be found. Curls I detested (I was given to strong expressions); but by no power had I been able to conquer them, so finally I gave up the struggle, drew back the refractory mass of sunshine from my face, tied it with a brown ribbon, and concerned myself no further with it, except that I felt obliged to repeat the brown color upon my dress. The inevitable bow was laughed at—another reason for my persistence in wearing it, besides that my eyes, eyebrows, and eyelashes were unmistakably of that shade. My rambles in the woods were probably the reason why I had more trouble than usual with my aureole; but they did not account for my not putting on the black habit which hung conveniently over the back of a chair, or for the pains I took to array myself in a new one of dark blue cloth, with velvet jacket, and hat and feathers to match. The reflections of my glass on the subject quite satisfied me, the golden hair certainly looking better over the rich blue than it ever looked before; so, in improved temper, I hastened to relieve my impatient steed.

We had a glorious gallop, Black Beauty and I.

He was a magnificent creature, as proud of himself and his appointments as possible for a half human horse to be. He never carried me more superbly ; and the way we stunned two strange and now *erect* young men, whom we met at every turn, seemed to delight him as much as it did his rider. I could only see, in my rapid flight, that the strangers were tall and fine-looking ; they stood with their hats off when I passed ; and that they ever played leap-frog was so impossible I put it away among myths and legends, or among wild dreams. One of them had a white object on his shoulder, which I concluded was the dove. A quiet self-contempt disturbed me a little, for caring what impression I made upon them ; but I did care, and I knew it. On my return there was hardly time to consider again that "shackle of society" known as "dress." Several dresses were tried on, then the cardinal silk ; the brown bow on it was impossible after the success of the blue velvet and gold. I had started on too great a height to come down gracefully. An impertinent sunbeam looked in, firing up the deep coloring of the dress like a blaze.

"Milly, Milly," called mamma.

I hastily put on an overdress of some odd white lace fabric, the value of which I did not know, substituting for the bow, a chatelaine—my uncle's last gift—it was a wonderful mass of tortoiseshell and gold, and its effect just what I wanted, as the elegant observation of

my assistant proved (she was hardly entitled to the name "maid"). "Well I nivir! Yees jist hit it."

"Milly, *do* come!"

"Yes mamma." An Arabian burnous was put around me and we soon reached the hall. There was a straight, shaded walk for us when we were in haste, and another one winding through the loveliest parts of the grounds for other times; to-day we hastened through the shorter path, relieved to find the guests still in the dressing rooms. My friend, or rather "follower," Ellen Ramsay, was watching for me. "You are superb to-day, Milly," she exclaimed, "and not an ornament but that chatelaine. I forgot the daylight, when I put on all this jewelry," and the bracelets and bangles were shaken violently. Before I could reply, one of the maids brought me a message from my uncle, "Will Miss Hartley come down before the other ladies." Miss Hartley liked to enter first, crowds being another of her pet aversions, so without delay I descended the marble stairway, and met my uncle at the drawing-room door. His face beamed with happiness, for his two sons—men to be proud of—stood beside him.

"Mildred, allow me to present my sons, Roland and Vic; your cousin Mildred, boys."

It was very informal; they shook hands, and said "Mildred" without ceremony, so that I adopted "Roland," and tried to say "Vic." This extraordinary

fancy of my uncle it was impossible to follow ; I decided on "Victor."

"Now, my dear, you will oblige me by helping me to receive and introduce our guests." I could not avoid it, so I asserted myself for once, and played hostess as best as I could.

"Thank you, Milly," whispered mamma, "I refused, but did not know you would suffer." There was no opportunity to reply, for Miss Ramsay, Miss Ellen Ramsay, the Reverend Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Edward Jones, Mr. Henry Dedham, Mr. and Mrs. Trent, followed in quick succession, were presented and passed. Then others, till nearly thirty guests had entered. Then the dinner—but dinners are nearly alike, in the homes of luxury. We only saw fruits and flowers, with shining silver and starry crystal. Prescott and his assistants took entire charge of us. We ate what was placed before us, and drank what was placed beside us, asking no questions. The conversation brightened as we went on, sparkled with the champagne, and quieted again under ices and fruits. We went outside for coffee, and every one appeared to be having "the nicest of nice times," as Ellen expressed it.

It was still light, the very longest day. I became tired of it all, and, slipping through the crowd on the portico, escaped from a side door, and reached the Wilderness unobserved. In a secluded place was my favorite haunt, the heap of rocks, partly covered by

trees and foliage, but open on the side towards the river, as we called the little stream. Among these rocks my friend Nature built me a curious seat, the stone rising at the back and on each side. I had labored to make moss grow on the entire pile, but had only been successful with the seat. This was nicely cushioned. To this place I went, and, heated with my rapid walk, my head weary with the weight of my hair, I untied it, let it fall around me, and went to sleep. "Oh, *don't* move! Never in my life did I see so lovely a picture," was the unprecedented sound that wakened me. Naturally I did move, and sat up at once, and, with flaming cheeks, asked by what right I was intruded upon? He sighed—the man had the audacity to sigh deliberately. "You have spoiled the most exquisite effect I ever saw produced." He closed his eyes, and, with an evident effort to reproduce it, murmured: "The mossy background, the golden hair, the glint of the last sunbeam!"

"Pray, Roland, are you subject to attacks of insanity!" I coolly asked, while fully conscious of the excessively dishevelled condition of my hair.

"Don't, don't!" he entreated, in a dreamy way. "I shall lose that calm rest!" and without another word, he left me.

"Decidedly," I laughed, "he is a lunatic."

Wakened so suddenly and so oddly, I was partly bewildered, but presently remembered that I had

wearied of the people, had failed to disturb the rector, by propounding doubts, had hated Ellen Ramsay for wearing buff and jewelry, which, beside the yellow satin of the drawing-room was unendurable, had wondered why my dignified uncle said "Vic," until there was no relief but escape. Being a very contrary young person, when I would not do what I ought, I usually did what I ought not, and so I had gone to sleep on the rocks, and been discovered by Roland, whose extraordinary performance was so comical that, as I considered the matter, I laughed aloud merrily.

"Good! I have found you," and Victor appeared, like Actæon among the branches. "Are you alone?"

"I *was* alone."

"But you were laughing?"

"At something irresistibly comic."

"Why did you run away? We wanted you to sing."

"Do you know you are catechising me?"

"I have only asked one simple question."

"*Three.* One after the other. I'll swear to it."

"Pray don't; I believe I did. But why did you run away?"

"Take the consequences, then. I was tired of you."

"Do you always do just what you like?"

"Always."

"Do you mind my being here?"

"I mind your asking questions. That is five."

He laughed, and I said, "Why do you laugh?"

"You are so extraordinary, and look so picturesque, Roland would rave over you."

"Why?"

"Because—but why do you ask questions?"

"To gain information. Why would he rave?"

"Because he is an artist—"

"That explains it."

"Explains what?"

"That is number six."

"I promise to ask no more, if you will truly tell me why you left us."

"I told the truth. I always do. You were tiresome, and I like to be alone."

"You did not speak ten words to me. How did you know I am tiresome?"

"Number seven."

"If you are a sphinx, I must ask questions."

"If you solve my riddle, I must destroy myself."

"Heaven forbid. I will ask no more if you tell me this."

"I did not mean I was tired of any one individually, but of all generally. I always come here when I am vexed."

"What vexed you?"

"Number eight."

"Do tell me."

“Ellen Ramsay, Mr. Jones, and the butler.”

“What have they done? I thought I never saw more inoffensive people, nor a more perfect *chef*.”

“Number nine. I hate inoffensive people, and an affectation of perfection puts me in a rage.”

“How?” with a puzzled expression.

“Number ten. Inoffensive people are so from cowardice, and perfection is impossible. When I am vexed by such things, I come here and crush the giants.”

“Crush the giants. How? Pardon my repeating your words.”

“Number eleven. Juno hurled these rocks on the giants. They are underneath. I love to crush them *flat*.”

Such a peal of laughter my birds never heard before :

“Oh, do forgive me, you are the oddest girl I ever saw. I am glad I need not be ceremonious.”

“Do not be too sure. I am very angry with you for intruding. No one ever disturbs me here.” He colored, and, I fancied, wanted to remind me that his right on any part of the grounds was unquestionable. I could not force him to leave me, so gathering up my hair, and tying it again, I said : “I am going to row on the river. Will you come? My boat, the ‘Water Lily,’ is close by.”

"I cannot leave my father's guests so long. Come back with me, you cannot row in that dress."

"I intend to, however," was all the reply I vouchsafed. So I left him, dragging my train and laces through the woods, quite regardless of their fate. "How dare he speak of my dress?" I thought.

"It's so beautiful, do be careful," he called after me. "Shall I send you a shawl?"

"No, thank you," I replied, more vexed than before.

Dear little Water Lily, my temper had never proved too heavy for it; it bore me safely, and I followed the stream through the darkening woods, turning into the creek, so that I could land at the pavilion. I did not think of finding the whole party there, and before I could escape I heard: "Oh, Mildred, you selfish girl! stop this minute and take me in," and Ellen Ramsay was waiting for me on the marble steps, over the lower one of which the water flowed. I could not refuse, and she was in the boat in a moment, Victor helping her.

"Isn't he splendid?" she asked, as soon as he was at a safe distance.

"I do not know him yet," I answered.

"He knows you," she laughingly replied, "for he says you are the most original girl he ever saw, and that shows he can find out in a moment, for you have hardly spoken to him. I was on the stairs when you

were introduced, and watched you till you ran away."

"Thank you for your espionage."

"Now, Milly, don't be cross. I could not help seeing that he hardly spoke to you, and he has been with me ever since you disappeared."

"Has he?" giving the words a well-defined form of doubt.

She looked at me inquiringly, then ventured bravely on: "Yes, all the time; he has never left me for a moment. I don't mean to take much notice of Roland, he is the adopted son, and, for all we know, may have been born in a coal shed."

"Hardly, in Italy."

"Nonsense; a flower stand then; he is mysterious."

The buff dress had been in danger for some time, but I controlled myself, and, thinking of the giants, rowed in silence.

"For goodness sake, Mildred! do say something; it's growing dark and pokerish. Are you going to-morrow?"

"Where?"

"I forgot you could not know. To Ferny Dell. Victor got up the party as soon as I proposed it. We are to lunch there."

"I am not going."

"Well, there is no reason I should not make the most of my advantages. I don't wish to interfere

with you, of course, but if Victor don't take to you there is no reason I should not do my best."

"None in the world, I assure you. I shall not interfere."

"I was sure of that, you are such a goose. I'll tell you one thing he said; he saw you on horseback to-day, and said he never saw anything so magnificent in his life, you rode superbly, and that you looked like a vision of—I forget what—and that he was afraid to see you afterwards for fear he would be disenchanted."

"We may conclude he was, from his devotion to you."

"Yes, I think so. Of course you know you look better on horseback than anywhere else. Do go back. I am afraid."

I rowed to the Pavilion. Victor was on the steps, with the odd addition of the dove on his shoulder. He fastened the boat for me, and we returned to the Hall together, the bird fluttering around us. Miss Ramsay was waiting for Ellen, the rest were gone.

"Come, Ellen," said the ancient maiden, "the carriage has been waiting for some time. Shall we drop you and Mildred at the cottage, Mrs. Hartley?"

We accepted the invitation, for my uncle looked weary, and, bidding him and Victor good-night, were soon at our little domain. Then I remembered that I did not see Roland when I left.

CHAPTER II.

WE HAVE TWO PICNICS AND A THUNDER-STORM.



HE next morning found me unchanged in my determination not to go to such a senseless entertainment as the picnic, but I helped mamma in her preparations, and ventured a little sympathy on her being obliged to go. Her reply quietly informed me that there were both pleasures and duties in life, and in this case they were happily united. I offered my congratulations on this paradisaical state of things, with a secret wonder at her good nature. At that moment the merry party, in a large wagon which we used for such occasions, drove up. Mamma was joyfully received, while I was bantered on my love of solitude.

“Are you quite sure you do not want to tell some one how you love to be alone?” laughed Ellen.

“Quite sure,” I replied. “Good-bye.”

With a book, taken without noticing its title, I wandered to the Wilderness. The birds were very merry as I came among them, singing a more rollicking song of welcome than ever. The woods were full of the delicious incense that rises from the leaves when first the sun touches them, the flowers were

springing to life on every side, and through the trees a glint of the river, gladdened in the sunlight, added a subtle charm to this fullness of life, which fills

“the fane, most catholic and solemn,
Which God hath planned.”

I did not bow before the Maker and Builder of the Temple, and ask what He would have me do. I was only outwardly touched by the peace of the “green aisles.” My spirit was

“bowed and bent,
In sad unrest and ill content,”

and I blamed everythir.g but myself. I did try conscientiously to discover why I was more disturbed than usual, why my restless spirit refused to be quieted. Was it my cousins? No, they were rather agreeable than otherwise, and my uncle’s happiness reconciled me to their presence in a way I could not explain. It *was* annoying to be subject for the future to constant interruptions; and I had always disliked a large family because of the incessant supervision that one has to bear from them; but fortunately men were less objectionable in this light than women. Perhaps Ellen Ramsay was harder to endure than usual. She had elected to be my intimate friend; she laughed at my moods, regarded no slights, and I was actually forced to accept her; but I would not admit that she

had the power to make me more than uncomfortable. At last I concluded it was life's restlessness that grated upon me, its untruthfulness that roused my antagonism; and much sentimental nonsense did I imagine about a mission of resistance, in which I would unmask and crush hypocrisy in every shape. I did not see how I could avoid joining in the festivities which I foresaw for the summer, but I would condemn their frivolity unsparingly. I roused myself to such a warlike condition that I was ready to charge with the "Six Hundred."

" Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,"

rang through my brain, with naturally, "*Cui bono?* What good did they do?" In those days I was an incarnated as well as a bristling negation. My beligerent mood was so out of place, where nothing opposed me—not even an insect barring my progress—that as the absurdity of it all flashed upon me, I opened my book to forget myself and my useless introspection.

It was a small, blue-covered volume of poetry, in which I not unreasonably expected to be raised to higher realms of thought, or at least to find some fancy sketch of life. My eyes fell on these prosaic words :

“In a world full of lips that lack bread,
And of souls that lack light, there are mouths to be fed;
There are wounds to be healed, there is work to be done;
And life can withhold love and duty from none.”

I threw it down as if it had struck me. I had no idea of devoting the grand mystery of life to the service of others, in that weary way. I wished to find the *root* of the evil. I would first conquer a peace, before I could rest. Then some little bird burst out into such a flood of melody, I stopped to listen; then I heard the gentle kiss of the river, touching

“the sedges in its pilgrimage.”

I never could resist such influences. They carried off my thoughts into idle dreams, in which I might have passed my morning, but for an interruption, which first annoyed me, and then—but the “then” will come in good time.

“May I join you, Mildred? I did not go to the picnic.”

“Evidently, Roland, I see you did not,” I replied.

“I staid with papa, and read him to sleep.”

“Most noble son!”

“Not altogether; I knew you were not going, and therefore did not care to.”

“I cannot imagine my presence or absence affecting any one.”

“It *is* odd; but when I came to the point of decis-

ion, which was when the subject of a proper coat came before me, I found myself indifferent. Rigid self-examination showed me it was because you were not going."

"You don't know what you have lost," I answered, turning the subject from what seemed very silly flattery.

"No, and never will know. I have come to find out what I would have lost had I gone."

I laughed in spite of myself. "I can soon tell you what will happen. We will have a vapid sort of conversation, during which I will say uncivil things; you will then seek relief in exploring the Wilderness; finally, you will yawn yourself to death."

"What an ignoble end! I deny all. I will be so lovely that you will be in a good humor; I will *not* explore the Wilderness, nor will I yawn once."

"Begin to be lovely then; I am not in a very amiable mood."

"One moment—what book have you? *Lucille*? Do you like *Lucille*?"

"Don't talk to me as you do to other girls."

"I assure you I have never before asked that question of a human being."

"I decline to answer."

"I'm not going to be vexed, I'm too lovely for that."

"You have begun, then."

“My dear cousin, I am naturally lovely, it began when I began. I was made so.”

“Don’t call me ‘cousin,’ it is my pet aversion, and a lovely man is atrocious.”

“I know, and I mourn my fate ; I could not live were I not supported by the presence of danger.”

“What danger ?”

“I am walking on the edge of a precipice, a slight idiosyncrasy of my companion may throw me over. I assure you the sensation is delightful.”

“So far your choice of situations proves you to be a very idle young man.”

“This is my vacation ; if you knew how I have studied, and where, you would not say so.”

“Where ! I thought you had been at Heidelberg.”

“True, but there are different meanings to that. We—for Victor and I were together—were not of the German student type ; we did not study the use of what you Americans call ‘shooting irons,’—do you not ?”

I refused to answer such slander, and he went on, “We board with a simple-hearted German family ; they have a vineyard ; among the vines there stands an arbor, made of vine roots ; to this arbor there is a door, and to the door a key, which is *mine*. There I have my books and papers, and there I dream.”

“I thought you studied.”

“When my daily work is over, I mean, then I open

the door. The valley of the Neckar lies before me, and the quaint old town of Heidelberg. Above it the castle rises on the hill-top. I dream of the fair ladies and brave men who were once at home there. I fancy how the moon shone upon a fair face, raised to the stalwart knight, whose arm boldly encircled her lovely form ; I fancy how the two leaned over the parapet of the terrace, how they started when they heard a footstep, and how the promise of that bright evening was turned to an agony of woe, when the same brave knight came with the clank of armor, to say farewell. One must dream at Heidelberg, one must recall the past to people the present, for the town is old and dreary, and the castle is a ruin."

"And one can fill all with their own fancied heroes, and forget the petty hatefulnesses of everyday life."

"Yes, Mildred ; but one must eat and drink, and after I dream awhile I have a pipe and beer."

"Roland—*I hate you!*"

"Now, I have failed. I forgot about being lovely."

"I thought you were 'made so.'"

"So I was, but I have not fulfilled the glorious promise of my being. Shall I give up smoke and beer? What can I do to restore myself to your favor?"

“You had never attained it, and I am quite indifferent to your pursuits.”

“Smoke and beer are not pursuits, they are recreations. But I have others.”

“What are they?”

“Sometimes, after I have watched the clouds changing around the castle—for at Heidelberg the castle seems that for which all Nature lives and moves—watched the light fall from tower and terrace, I feel that I must pass my evening amid its gray beauty, and I descend the hill on which our garden lies; at its foot, there is a stable, where I keep my horse; I saddle him myself, and then we ride along the river bank, cross the bridge, clatter through the stony streets, ascend the picturesque road that leads to the castle, and there a little boy, a good friend of mine, takes Max, whilst I enter the court on foot. I always aim at the terrace—there are seats there; and there, fair cousin, I pass my evening, dreaming bright dreams of home, and fancying bright fancies of *you*.”

“Of me! What induced you to think of me there?”

“It seemed the proper thing to do. The fair ladye, with her brave knight, had followed the long procession which began with Abel. I was alone. I needed some one to love. The German beauties never pleased me; the English society seemed incongruous

with the surroundings. Was it unnatural for me to think that some time we orphan boys might have a home, and to place in it the image of our only young relative?"

"Thank you, Roland," I said humbly. I cannot tell why this touched me, nor why I remembered that he was hardly justified in calling me a relative.

"What did you say to Victor about giants?"

I fired up at once. "If you two boys are going to compare notes, I will not talk to either of you." He saw his mistake, but with a coolness I never saw equaled, replied :

"We do not mean to make a habit of it ; in fact, we will only resort to it on extraordinary occasions. He certainly did report to me, as something startling, that you had a lot of giants under a heap of rocks, and when you were inordinately vexed you added your immense weight to the superincumbent stones and crushed them. Now, I think you must acknowledge that to strangers and searchers for American novelties, this is sufficiently extraordinary to excuse repetition."

I ignored this, and replied, "I wish I could really do so, there are so many in life."

"For instance—"

"Giant Deception, the great lie of life, that stalks abroad clad in silks and laces, or in broadcloth and fine linen."

He eyed me curiously.

"Or Giant Pride, whose head towers above all human kind, soaring to unattainable heights, with his feet in a ditch; or Giant Detraction, with his smile and his forked tongue."

"I foresee we are to be kindred spirits; go on."

"No, I have done. They are hydra-headed and will not die."

"You must go with me to Palazzo Thè."

"What is there?"

"A room painted to represent a cave. On the walls are huge rocks crushing the giants, and overhead Juno hurling them down."

"How delightful! And the giants?"

"Ah, they are as hard to kill as yours. One is struck on his head, and the result is only that he is pressed down and widened to a preposterous extent. They are India-rubber giants."

"I would like to see them ever so much."

"You shall, some day."

"Uncle Hartley has promised to take us abroad."

"If he does not, there are Hartleys enough to do so. Papa has a villa at Bellagio; did you know it?"

"No; his Italian experiences have never been revealed."

"We will go there, too. Victor and I went once."

"By-the-by, when are the picnickers coming back?"

I asked, for there was an odd tone about this adopted

son that I did not understand. I had feared some plan between my uncle and mamma in regard to Victor and myself, and was accordingly prepared to resist, but I could see no advantage in Roland's devotion to me ; it even occurred to me to be surprised that no messenger from the Hall summoned him. An excuse would have been easy to find.

"They return to dine at the Hall at eight, precisely. Prescott is dotting the great round table with tiny glasses, each one to contain a floral treasure—he has a new fancy each day. After dinner we are going to dance."

"In picnic costume?"

"Yes ; Miss Ramsay went off in Nile green ; you can fancy its color now. You will have the advantage in coming out fresh and gorgeous."

"I cannot imagine myself doing such an outrageous thing."

"As what ? Did I propose anything very dreadful?"

"It would be unfair, when the girls are all coming in the dresses they have worn all day."

"My dear child, I spoke according to my knowledge of the women I have met. Pardon me for classing you among them."

There was a tone in this that made me seek another subject. So I asked : "What is the programme for to-morrow?"

“If you will propose something, I will see that it is accomplished in every particular.”

Truly my uncle had made this boy feel at home. I replied that I must return home for luncheon if dinner was to be so late.

“Oh, I have such a brilliant idea, if you will only agree. Will you, Mildred?”

“I have not heard it.”

“Stay where you are. Are you tired? are you comfortable?”

“No, and Yes,” I replied, laughing.

“Then I will go to the Hall, and Prescott shall send us out the most Arcadian of lunches; there never was a lovelier spot for two to lunch; there is only room for two. May I? *Do say yes!*”

“Yes, certainly; it will save me a warm walk.”

“For *any* reason, most ungracious cousin, so that I have this pleasure. I will be gone nearly an hour; rest, will you not?”

“I have nothing to rest for. I am not at all tired.”

He was gone; the branches soon hid him from view, and when his presence was removed, I began to question whether this was quite just to his father, who had passed so many hours alone. Perhaps he will send the lunch and stay with him, I thought. I had, however, no alternative but to wait. The neglected *Lucille* was taken up, but my thoughts were on the

old terrace at Heidelberg, and picturing Roland hastening from his arbor to pass an evening there.

Presently voices approached, and one of the men with a hamper, and Roland, carrying a pail of ice, appeared.

“Here, William, we are going to lunch on these rocks. Lift the hamper there, and go for water. That will do.”

Then Roland and I, with much merriment, set our table. We had a feast of good things, and no defect in our appetites, for youth, health and open air are powerful stimulants.

“What did Uncle Hartley say?” I asked, as I enjoyed some of his most precious hot-house grapes. Roland colored. What a tell-tale face this boy had! Something had passed.

“He said he was glad I had thought of some way of entertaining his little girl.”

“Did he not feel lonely?”

“No; he has a grim, tiresome old lawyer to lunch.”

“I know—Chetwood.”

“Yes, that is the name. He did not need me.”

When our little feast was over, and we had amused ourselves with giving the remnants to the birds, hanging grapes upon the boughs for them, Roland proposed rowing me in the little boat up the shaded stream. It was one of nature’s most glorious

of June days, and in the hush that sometimes falls on even the feathered songsters in the deep stillness of the woods, we floated off in the Water Lily.

In following the windings of the stream there was one point where we were not far from the Hall ; there Roland took from his pocket a little silver stag's head, and blew a shrill whistle.

I started with the sudden sound.

"Only for William to go for the *débris* on the rocks," he explained.

But it revealed to me that Roland had arranged this signal. Why should he not ? And yet, I had not exactly expected to see the servants of Hartley Hall ready to obey such signals from Victor's adopted brother.

We did not talk much ; it was enough to listen, for the momentary hush was over ; there was music everywhere, from the ringing of the floral bells to the rustling leaves of the tree tops ; from the plash and tinkle of the water as the oars rose and fell, to the home song of the robin.

"Mildred, it is of this I have dreamed," said Roland, almost in a whisper.

I let the silver drops play about my hand, and only looked at him.

"*Mildred!* speak ; you look like a vision."

"Roland," I said, with an effort.

"Oh, to hear *that* for daily music ! To hear the

soft intone of request, Roland! to hear the tear-note of farewell, Roland! to hear the joyous note of welcome, Roland!" and this strange boy imitated every different emotion in the one word.

"But—Roland—"

"Stop, Mildred; must there be a 'but' between us?"

There seemed a glamour closing over me; what was it? was it magnetic power in this boy, whom I had first met yesterday? Why did I feel as if I could gaze on him forever? No! I would not yield to this strange influence; my negation asserted itself.

"No! no! Roland, you shall not bring upon me the spirit of this solitude; you are taking unfair advantage. I cannot run from you, I hardly dare move in this little boat; you make me as dreamy as yourself. *Stop, Roland!*"

His deep eyes were upon me, as if he were looking into my soul. It held a secret then I would not have him read. I must break the spell somehow; so, with an effort that seemed as if it would destroy me, I sang the bright little old-fashioned song:

"Sing away, sing away, by day and by night;
This world is a bright little world of delight."

It relieved me; I was myself again. With a deep sigh, Roland appeared to release himself, and then was as wildly enthusiastic about my singing, as if the

past few moments were blotted out. He has told me since that he was not conscious of any effort to attract me ; he only felt as if our hearts were drawing closer, in a sympathy that no power could sever.

I do not know how the hours passed so quickly after that. We sang, we talked, we took turns in rowing, we stopped to gather flowers, we listened to the notes of the wood-thrush, so thrilling in their loveliness, and yet so full of the pathos of deep solitude—then words seemed no more needed ; we floated on the stream in silence, until the sun had set, and the moon had hung her silver bow upon a star.

“The light lingers long,” said Roland. “Sunlight hovers regretfully over this dear, beautiful world. Apollo is jealous of Dian.”

“Byron says it more tunefully,” I replied.

“Does he ? I know very little of Byron.”

“The moon is up, and yet it is not night ;
Sunset divides the ~~day~~ with her.” *sky*

“Well done, for the old cynic ! Mildred, my dear, he is out of date.”

“Then life and love, and hope and fear, and every passion, is out of date ; then Nature’s wildest freaks and calmest joys are out of date ; then man’s greatest works, and Time’s soft mantle that falls upon them, are out of date ! Byron ! I am no sentimental school-girl, but I know he has spoken words that can-

not die ; he has clothed thoughts that are immortal !”

“Forgive me, Mildred. I did not fancy his was your favorite poetry.”

“It is not ; a favorite poetry is impossible.”

“How?”

“Does one wear the same dress for every purpose ? Can I clothe my mind always with the same robe ? What would fit my sad hours would crush me in my joyous ones ; what would suit me in the peace of to-day, would come nowhere near my mood when I am filled with irrepressible longings.”

There was no time for a reply. A sound struck upon our ears ; the carriages were returning.

“It is quicker to row to the Pavilion,” said Roland, “and if you are not going to change your dress, it will reach home more safely from there. A spot or stain upon it would seem to me as if it sullied a soul.”

Being somewhat subdued by the day’s experiences, I had no answer ready. I had longed for a new sensation. It had come !

The boat was given in charge of a servant. In a few moments we were on the portico, receiving the merry party, and parrying their badinage at our absence, and my solitude. I took the ladies to some of the up-stairs rooms, where maids were soon busy in repairing damages, and in making the toilettes presentable for dinner.

“Do see my dress!” exclaimed Ellen Ramsay, “it is spoiled. Mr. Hartley insisted on my taking a long walk with him. What an object I am!”

I turned away, but not as glad as usual at Ellen’s discomfiture. The rooms were so full, that as soon as possible I went out on the gallery to wait till the chattering crowd were ready. The boys, as my uncle called them, were going down. Roland came back: “I am to sit by you at dinner—I looked at the cards—but I may have no chance to ask this: Will you dance *only* with me, Milly, Milly darling?”

I looked at him in amazement. What could he mean? If he only had not fixed his eyes upon me, I could have refused. Then what right had he to speak as he did to me? What had I done but repulse him?

“Quick! they are coming; tell me!”

“I promise.” I could not help it.

“Only with me?”

“Only with you.” Whereupon this absurd boy sprang over the baluster, caught it again as it turned, and stood safely beside Victor on the marble floor below. The brothers entered the drawing-room together, and were laughing over the feat when we came down. Deft hands conquered the day’s ravages, and a brighter set of young people had rarely filled my uncle’s rooms. We were soon taken to the dining hall—it was large and circular, the table being of the same shape, so there was no preference in seats.

Victor and Roland were placed on each side of my uncle—an odd arrangement, but apparently much enjoyed by the three men. No one could tell on which of his sons my uncle's loving glance was oftenest turned. Roland claimed his attention the most frequently, but I fancied a greater tenderness in the tone used to the other, whom he so strangely called "Vic," and whom we had, by one consent, decided was his own son.

Prescott's table to-day was a parterre of choice flowers ; it was covered with small glasses, each one only large enough for one flower, with its leaf ; the center piece was a low basket of fruits ; the effect of the whole was particularly beautiful.

"We ought to be in velvets and laces," said Ellen, who was beside Victor.

"And yet, Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these," he replied, taking up an exquisite variety of dwarf tulip ; "what are the finest of eastern fabrics to this?"

"Very beautiful," said Ellen ; "but natural flowers fade so soon, I always wear artificial."

Then individual voices were lost, and the picnic experiences became quite tumultuous, so that Roland and I were able to have a pleasant conversation under cover of the general fire of wit and nonsense, but I wearied of it. As Ellen's voice rose higher and higher, I began to think of my giants ; her tones roused them.

It was a relief when my uncle rose, and we ladies could take our coffee on the portico, in the summer twilight. Soon we were joined by the gentlemen, of whom there were a number from the neighboring families. As I had some special reason of dislike for each one, when Victor proposed a promenade, I gladly took his arm. We were having a merry sort of talk, he defending himself from my charges of having told Roland about the giants, when I caught my uncle's eye; there was an expression in it that made me wonder what I was doing that he did not like. Roland joined us soon after, and I forgot it. When the music began, Victor excused himself, to fulfill an engagement to dance with Miss Ramsay, and Roland claimed me. Hardly waiting for me to take breath, I was whirled off, round and round in an ecstasy of motion and of sound, till I was fairly faint and dizzy.

"Oh, Mildred!" he exclaimed suddenly, discovering my paleness, "I forgot you were human and could weary;" and in one more turn he brought me to an open window, where the air restored me. Ellen and Victor were standing apart, playing with his bird, but joined us to urge our accompanying the party already prepared for the next day.

"We are going to the Indian Well," said Ellen.

"It will answer as a point, I suppose," I replied; "it is of no great interest."

"We have no castles or grand old ruins, you

know, Milly, so don't throw cold water on the Well—we must go somewhere," returned Ellen.

"That being the case, I will neither throw cold water on or in the Well. Pray go and enjoy it." Roland looked at me with an odd look of inquiry. I could not account for its effect on me, yet I knew it as the reason which induced me to add: "I will go on horseback."

"And I," added Roland, quickly. "I will order your horse; which one gaits best with him?"

"If I take Black Beauty, you must ride Nimrod," I replied, noticing again that Roland was first in giving orders.

The dancing was kept up till a late hour, but the heat was singularly oppressive to me, and I made my excuses as soon as I could civilly do so, glad to reach our quiet home, and relieved that Roland did not propose to remain a moment after seeing me safely to the door.

On the morrow I felt very loving and gentle to mamma, whose duties as a matron were rather severe, and offered whatever help I could give.

"Look and talk *all day* as you do now," said she; "that will help me."

The carriages drove up at that moment, followed by the wagon, with provisions and servants for a regular dinner, so that the programme might be varied by a Tea at the Hall. I stood in my blue riding-dress,

thinking of mamma's speech and waiting for Roland. The horses appeared, the groom, and Victor !

“Mildred, I have my brother's apologies to offer you. He is prevented from going by something that he feels obliged to do to-day. Will you accept my escort ?”

I could say nothing of regret without being uncivil to Victor, and, struggling with a heart-sinking for which I reproached myself, I tried as I mounted the horse to retain an unmoved expression. “I have known you both so short a time,” I said, “that it would be hard for me to choose. I certainly am quite ignorant of your equestrian powers.”

“My brother is the better horseman,” said Victor, “but we are well mounted, and I will try not to disgrace this noble creature. We will have to give both of them their heads for a while ; they are aching for a run.”

I always enjoyed being on horseback, and my disappointment was not so great but that the swift motion and sense of power raised my spirits, and Victor certainly had not a dull companion. We overtook the carriages, and passed them, for the dust was unbearable. I caught a glimpse of Ellen Ramsay's face of blank dismay. It rather pleased me to show her that she could not claim Victor, though I was certainly quite guiltless of any effort to attract him. The idea that my uncle would like me to do so was quite suffi-

cient to prevent my being more than civil to him. It even occurred to me that Roland was purposely kept at home, but I rejected this thought; anything less than perfect truth was too much opposed to my uncle's whole nature. I felt that some spirit of evil must have suggested it. Whether the spirit were good or evil, the effect rendered me uncomfortable, and very indisposed to be pleased, even with Victor, who made himself a delightful companion, giving no sign of noticing my moodiness.

We reached the Indian Well, the party united, and the usual arrangements were soon made, but with a languor for which we blamed the extreme heat. Presently Ellen drifted towards Victor and me, and instead of plunging into her usual wild nonsense, besought him to find her "the dearest little white flower, scented like vanilla, about half a quarter of a yard high." She indicated the other side of a rock for his search, and when he was out of hearing exclaimed, "I'm dying to tell you something—watch the first opportunity." Victor returned with the flower, the fragrant pipsisewa, and I, caring little for Ellen's communication, gave her no further thought.

We were soon summoned to dinner, which was deprived of its gypsy element by the presence of the servants, but much more comfortable than usual. When it was over, and the men lolling on the grass with their cigars, Ellen asked me to walk with her up the

little stream, which, as it fell into a hollow rock, formed what we knew as the Indian Well.

“ I can wait no longer, Mildred ; I *must* tell you. Last night, you know, you went home before we did. I can't fancy what took you away. While Roland was gone with you, I walked with Victor, on that long terrace that goes past the housekeeper's and butler's rooms, and by that entrance where the luggage comes in—my dear ! a mysterious lady arrived ! We stopped as the carriage drove up. She did not wait to have the door opened, but opened it herself ; her veil was down, and she walked in quite alone. There was a murmur of voices ; then Victor said : ‘ This evidently does not concern us, Miss Ramsay, ’ and he hurried me away, as if he did not wish me to see any more ; but I got rid of him, and took Henry Dedham—he is always wild to go with me, you know—and we watched to see if the lady went out again. We heard no end of talking, and thought we would not find out about it ; but—now open your eyes, for, to our utter amazement, instead of her going out, Roland came *in* ; by that same door, following soon after the lady. Now, is not *that* wonderful ? I have noticed a sort of far-away look about Roland, and I believe he is privately married, and don't want his father to know. I do hope there will be some terrible secret. I'm delighted I saw it all. Isn't it delicious to have these Italian men here ? We are sure to have some-

thing wicked—some stiletto business. You see, now, why Roland did not come.” Ellen Ramsay’s stories never lost in the telling ; her inferences and her facts were inextricably mixed, and the result was tremendous. They toppled over finally, so far without serious harm ; but, all the same, she continued her researches for foundation stones, on which she erected wonderful fabrications. I replied : “The woman was probably a new servant, and Roland went in that door to escape the company.” But my heart was not at rest ; it was mysterious, for he looked at his watch when he left me, and then hastened his steps. The day was spoiled, and I vexed at myself for caring. I left Victor to Ellen, amusing myself with watching the tiny inhabitants of the little brook.

“What are you doing, my daughter ?” asked my mother.

“Nothing. Was there ever so stupid a day ! I am going to take the groom and go home. Do not tell Victor ; let him stay with Ellen.”

“He will then be obliged to ride back alone. We are all going soon.”

I did not wish to disturb Ellen’s *tête-a-tête* with Victor, but mamma insisted on telling him that I was preparing to return. He sprang up, fortunately not seeing the look of vexation which followed him, and mounting quickly, we were soon galloping off.

“I could not have endured the heat in the woods

much longer," he said. "The relief of freer air is delightful, and yet it is intensely warm even here. Thank you for coming."

I made some reply, but did not feel in the mood for talking. What with the heat and dust, and disappointment, I was provoked that I had not staid at home, and finally said, "I can't imagine why I came. If there is one thing I hate more than another, it is a picnic."

Victor laughed, but said: "I think we ought not to have had two so nearly together. This was by no means the success of yesterday's."

"It is probably my presence," said I.

"That you made impossible," he exclaimed. "But see the piles of thunder-clouds; we must hasten. I hope the others will follow soon."

We were all at home before the storm came. I refused to go to the Hall to tea, but the party were safely inside just as the thunder came in terrific peals, and the lightning flashed fearfully. I am a coward in a storm, and wished I had followed the others, instead of enduring it alone in the cottage.

Peal after peal! Will I ever forget that night! I threw myself on a sofa, and buried my head among its pillows, closing my eyes and putting my hands over my ears. I do not know how long I lay there, but at last an arm was around me, and Roland was kneeling

by my side. His hair was wet as it touched my face, and I started up in amazement.

“Roland! What *do* you mean! I am not dead. How dare you?”

“I am brave, Mildred, and can dare a great deal for you. It is too wild a night for you to be alone. The horses are too frightened to come out, your mother is anxious, so I volunteered to sink or swim in the attempt to reach you.”

“Thank you most sincerely. I am a wretched coward in storms, but there is no need of any protection but your presence,” and I drew away from this most devoted of cousins—“not a real cousin either,” I reminded myself, as the veiled lady flashed on my mind.

“Why did you stay home to-day, Roland?”

“I was busy with a lady. I sent a better fellow than I am in my place.”

“That is true,” said I, coolly. “I enjoyed my ride with Victor extremely. What a superb rider he is. Nimrod never looked better.”

“He rides tolerably. I wish I had Max here, I would show you something then.”

“Thank you; I am quite content with Victor and Nimrod.”

He looked at me with a puzzled expression—and then came a flash and a crash, and I knew no more, until I half roused from what seemed something lost;

in a moment was conscious of water on my brow, of a delicious perfume, and—of kisses on my face, and eyes, and lips. Thought comes as quickly as the lightning flash, and I knew instantly that I must recover gradually, and be entirely ignorant of what had passed, until at least I had time to think. I despised myself for this deception, but determined it should be short, and I felt bitterly disappointed in Roland for taking advantage of my insensibility. This takes long to tell, but was decided upon as soon as I felt the warm blood rising to my face. I moved, and sighed, and then sat up.

“There was a terrific crash, was there not? I am glad I only fainted, and was not struck. Thunder has always a strange effect upon me.”

“The great locust by the piazza was split in two, half of it fell instantly. The noise was fearful. I do not wonder you were frightened. Part of it was the electric fluid. I am hardly sure what I am doing myself.”

I wanted to strike him down then and there. He was very sure a few moments before.

“The storm has broken now,” I replied, “but the rain is like a waterspout. What will they all do at the Hall?”

“Stay all night, probably. I wish you were there. Have you any one to take care of you here?”

“Certainly. The servants are here. I am not at

all afraid. I have been alone here before ; when Uncle Hartley was ill, mother staid a week at the Hall. She must not try to come back to-night."

"She cannot, I think. And I must go ; it is very late. Are you sure you are safe, and not afraid ?"

"Perfectly ; and, moreover, I will be much better in the quiet of my room."

"Good night, then," and for a moment I feared a repetition of the scene during my insensibility, but my cool "Good night. Thank you for braving the elements," prevented any further trouble. I was alone.

The servants came to close the windows.

"Leave this one open," I said ; "I will close it when I go up."

And I did close it when I went up, but "morning was spread upon the mountains" before I moved.

Not the first young girl, utterly at sea in trying to reconcile the inconsistencies of a lover, I was disposed to blame myself, and tried to recall every word that had passed between us, but I found no cause for self-reproach. I had *not* encouraged Roland. How I hung upon his words, and listened for his step, was still my own secret. I knew he could not guess, from word or action, that I cared for him. Never given to self-deception, I could not conceal from myself that I by no means hated and despised him, as I ought, for taking unfair advantage of my insensibility. Why I

did not, was as great a mystery as his, of the veiled lady ; and much contempt I felt for myself, in consequence. At last I walked up and down the room, calling myself by many strong-minded names, but all the time conscious of an under-tone, on a new key, and its sound was Roland ! Roland !

Half vexed, half happy, wholly bewildered, I went to my room, and to sleep ; but not until the leaf shadows were quivering on my ceiling, as the sun looked from under the "eyelashes of the morning."

CHAPTER III.

A VAILED LADY MAKES DISTURBANCE.



It seemed as if a week had passed in my dreamless sleep, when Roland's voice under the window wakened me.

"When Miss Mildred wakes, tell her I came to take her to breakfast at the Hall; and, Bridget, say I will come again after breakfast."

This I heard, but I had my senses to-day, and performed my toilette duties without haste; if I were not ready he might wait. Mamma came with him the next time, and gave an amusing account of the way the guests were accommodated, of their merry tea and breakfast, with Uncle Hartley's delight at having a houseful of young people.

"You had better return with me, Mildred," she said. "They are all over the house, one party playing billiards, Miss Ramsay and your uncle deep in chess; Ellen is singing to Victor in the music room. There is a general necessity for my presence. If you will not come, you must stay here alone; I cannot spare Roland."

"Thank you, mamma; I assure you Roland is the last person I need. I would rather not come. Please

send the groom and Black Beauty. I will ride alone."

Mamma looked annoyed and Roland discomfited, but he made no remonstrance, even when we were left by ourselves for a few moments. He only asked: "Will you do me a favor, Mildred? There was something wonderful in the fabric of the lace over-dress you wore the day we came—a 'magic in the web' of it. I am a connoisseur in laces; will you lend it to me?"

"Rather an odd request. I nearly destroyed it in an effort to reach my boat through the brambles that day. You may have the scraps."

"Thank you; they will answer my purpose. I want to match it."

I brought the over-dress; it was badly torn.

"Is this the color of the dress you wore under it?" he asked, taking a piece of ribbon from his pocket.

"It is one of the bows of the dress. Pray, is there anything else you would like from my wardrobe?"

"Not to-day," he replied, looking amused at my indignation; "you will forgive me, when you see the use I make of it."

"The veiled lady must have lost her luggage, I think," said I.

"What veiled lady? What can you mean?"

I gave no answer, but turned to speak to mamma.

"If you change your mind, you will find a pleasant party," she said.

"I will come every hour, and ask if there is any hope," added Roland.

"I shall not go," was my reply.

My visits were not over; in less than an hour Ellen Ramsay appeared.

"Oh, Mildred! why did you not come last night? We had the greatest fun; if ever there was a blessing on a half-dead crowd, it has been the arrival of these men. Victor is splendid, and devoted to me; you are welcome to Roland; I don't want any left-handed adopted son; but I rather think you won't get him, either. What a girl you are, Mildred, for throwing your chances away! If I had been in your place, I would have made Mr. Hartley adore me, for the first thing."

"As you cannot possibly tell what you would have done in my place, it is unnecessary to tell me the second thing."

"Now, don't get on your high horse. I came to tell you something, and am going to rush right back again. I don't mean to lose a minute of that grand old Hall. It's such a grand thing that Aunt Norah likes chess. Will any one hear?"

"We are quite alone," I replied, without manifesting any interest.

"Now, listen, and see what you can make of it all.

Oh, I do wish the Hall was a great weird castle. You see, last night, when the storm was so terrific, we were frightened out of our senses, and if it hadn't been for the care Victor took of me, I would have fainted. It was he proposed we should stay; then Roland—who, by-the-by, gives most of the orders—I should think Victor would be furious—called the housekeeper, that fussy old thing, and told her he wanted all the rooms in order by eleven o'clock. I heard him say, 'I'm sorry I cannot spare my second room, but you know how it is occupied.' 'Oh, we can do very well,' she answered. Then I was afraid of being caught, but I knew well enough who has that room."

"Were you listening, Ellen?" She had the grace to color.

"I was standing in the hall, and overheard, but that is a small part of it. I saw no more of Roland till very late, but some one in that second room did. I know *that*. Victor said he had gone out, but that was nonsense, of course, in such a storm. When Victor went to his father, I concluded to go to bed. The storm was over. Aunt Ellen and I were to have the large front room on the east side. Roland's rooms are opposite. There are curtains, you know, to all the doors on that floor, and, as I afterwards found, a heavy curtain, of a gray shade, with gilt fringe, over the door between Roland's rooms."

“There is nothing of the kind, Ellen, in the house ; all the curtains of the doors are crimson.”

“My dear, don’t be so positive. *I saw it*. And how do you know what oriental jimcracks they may have brought ?”

“They have not been to the East.”

“Nonsense ! Who knows where boys go ? Besides, that mysterious lady may have brought it. The whole thing looks *haremy*. You do interrupt so, I shall never get back. I rushed up stairs first—now, don’t look so virtuous, I couldn’t help it, really. I heard Roland speak to Aunt Norah down stairs, so I knew he was safe for five minutes—she never lets any one off less than that. I just opened the curtain wide enough to peep through, and, my dear !—I had but a minute, but there was the lady, sure enough. She was just coming in the room from the other one. The curtain was draped on one side ; she was half dressed ; that is, I could not exactly tell what she had on. I saw a red skirt, and a white sort of cloud, and her face, with her hair all down, the way you have yours sometimes. The light was behind her somehow, so I had a very indistinct view, and as she was coming into the room through which I was looking, I had to take flight. I was none too quick, for I had hardly time to pretend to be examining the bronze statue that holds the lamp, when everybody came up.”

“ ‘ Ah, Miss Ramsay,’ said Roland, ‘ don’t you want to look through that curtain ?’

“ I thought I should have dropped, but answered bravely, ‘ Yes, indeed. What wonderful things have you inside ?’

“ He gave me a comical look, drew me one side, and said: ‘ Will you never, never reveal it, even under torture ?’

“ ‘ Wild horses won’t tear it from me,’ I said, making a mental reservation in favor of you.

“ ‘ *It’s my wife !*’ said he.

“ ‘ Roland,’ exclaimed Victor, ‘ how dare you be so imprudent !’

“ Roland colored. I can see he don’t like Victor’s interference. ‘ Miss Ramsay has promised never to reveal,’ said he, giving me a most beseeching look.

“ ‘ Never, on my honor,’ I said.

“ ‘ Sometime she shall see the light ; meanwhile, great events must happen. I depend on you, Miss Ramsay,’ he whispered.

“ Now, Mildred, what do you think of that ? I see it all : the veiled lady was this mysterious wife ; he was afraid I had looked, and thought it better to make a friend of me, and he dare not tell Mr. Hartley. Isn’t it too delicious for anything ? Oh, if it only were a castle, with dungeons and towers and winding stairs, and tapestried chambers, and picture galleries, and a precipice, it would be perfect.”

"What do you want with a precipice?" I asked, trying to seem composed.

"For some one to leap from, of course, and be all mangled on the rocks. You might do that; you are fond of astonishing every one."

"I shall not oblige you by committing suicide, and you certainly have made out quite a story; it will all be cleared up, of course. Meanwhile, keep Roland's secret."

"Indeed I will. You needn't try to take it so easily. You know it is wonderful. Oh, there is Victor! He has come after me."

But she was disappointed: Victor was on Nimrod and leading Black Beauty. I had forgotten my ride. The mood had passed; I was longing to be alone.

"You may go instead of me, Ellen. Go up and put on my black riding-dress; your own hat will do."

"You dear, delicious girl! You are just too lovely for anything!" and Ellen disappeared.

"Why did you do this, Mildred?" asked Victor, in a low voice.

"I expected to ride with the groom," I said, "and Ellen will be a far brighter companion than I."

"I am afraid of her," he whispered. "Is she safe?"

"Not as a repository of confidences," I replied. "She is kind-hearted enough."

"Roland has shut himself in his room for the day. I hoped for a few hours with you."

"I fancy we will have time enough during the summer to become acquainted," I replied with a struggle for composure, as I heard this of Roland.

"Come to luncheon, then," said Victor.

"Yes, I will come." His eye brightened, and I held Nimrod while he mounted Ellen. Black Beauty put his head beside my face as I spoke. I gave the expected caress, and charging Ellen to take good care of him, watched them canter gayly off. "And now," I thought, "how can I ever tell Roland of my moment of consciousness before I spoke? What can it all mean? 'Wife!' He *cannot* have a wife. What *did* he mean? Why has he shut himself in his room? He must think I am only a child; yet, yet—" and the boat scene came back—"there must be some explanation. Perhaps Ellen invented the whole story." Then I fled to my rocks, and, with my face buried in my hands, recalled the scenes that had already passed in that spot. But there was nothing gained by thought. The great gong at the stable struck for one o'clock, and I went to the Hall in a more uncomfortable frame of mind than ever. No one was visible. All the guests were scattered. I went up stairs to look for mamma, and, when I reached the gallery, turned at the sound of a footstep. Prescott was actually himself bringing a tray, and was followed by a servant with another—both well filled with luxuries. He looked annoyed when he saw me, but as I rarely spoke to my uncle's

servants, I had no explanation of the unusual proceeding, further than the disappearance of both men behind the curtain of Roland's door. I found mamma, but said nothing, and presently we were summoned to luncheon. The guests gathered by degrees. My uncle was looking bright and well.

"Where are my sons, Prescott?" he asked.

"Mr. Roland is coming; Mr. Victor has not yet returned," was the answer.

"Ah, Mildred, my dear little girl, I thought you were riding with Vic. This is better; I am glad you are here. Roland, my boy, I have hardly seen you to-day." And uncommonly happy my uncle seemed as he welcomed each guest on entering. My only thought was, "Those trays were not for Roland—who is eating in Roland's room?"

He was beside me, talking in his own bright way, with a sort of assured tone, that vexed me inexpressibly.

"Your lace dress was all I needed. I made the loveliest thing in the world of it. You shall see it when it is finished. I have been at work all the morning; my eyes are nearly out."

"Lace-makers or menders usually lose their eyesight," I remarked.

"Yes, but I was not mending it—Yes, papa, thank you; I heard a new horse had come, but did not know you had ordered one for me."

“Chetwood chose him; he is a capital judge. Will you try him this afternoon?”

“Certainly, if you wish, papa; but would prefer to-morrow morning, early. I am striving to work to-day.”

“You work too much, my boy.” Then Ellen Ramsay’s voice was heard, and she rushed up-stairs to change her dress. Old Miss Ramsay claimed my long-suffering uncle, and the rest of the party feeling less ceremonious than usual, the conversation became general.

It occurred to me to wonder whether they ever meant to go home. The undress uniform of these picnic-goers was becoming monotonous, and in painful contrast with the superb surroundings. I wondered they did not feel as I did, when, as a child, mamma sent me on some message to my uncle, in perhaps a school-dress. I was sure to be ushered in his presence by the immaculate Prescott, who lived in broad-cloth and fine linen, or to receive my answer from the sublime Mrs. Freeman. “Mamma, I look so, I felt like a kitchen-maid,” I would exclaim. “I did not imagine the accident of dress could make you feel less than a lady under any circumstances,” was the severe and crushing reply. Notwithstanding these towering educational advantages, I have never ceased to feel the dignity of a sweeping train, or of a dress thoroughly harmonious. I acknowledge this weakness, but I have it

yet, fully agreeing with Pope—"A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn."

The party took their leave soon after three o'clock. Roland disappeared, my uncle was tired, mamma went to drive with Victor, and I wandered aimlessly about the house, oppressed by its stillness. I was in the statue gallery when Prescott's smooth, inexpressive face appeared. With a low bow, he asked whether I would remain to dinner? As the table was always prepared for guests, and my staying or going would alter no arrangements, I knew Roland must have sent him, therefore replied in the negative. The profound bow was irreproachable, his slippered foot was heard on the steps, and Roland's voice in anxious questioning. I opened a window; it was not too far from the ground; a leap set me free, and, running under shelter of the shrubbery, I reached the Wilderness. There were safe retreats there that Roland did not know. I was hardly hidden when I heard his footsteps. One always heard Roland; he did nothing secretly. Then a waft of perfume, which I knew as a delicious extract that he used—I had time to think it effeminate, and strangely in contrast to his manliness --then, "Mildred! Mildred!"

The sound approached, I was motionless.

"Mildred, Mildred!" but I made no reply.

"A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," came into m

mind, with something akin to "dear, dear Roland, perhaps he can explain;" but I made no answer, and soon the echo of my name came to me only on the summer breeze. I went home after this, and when mamma returned, and we were dining quietly together, talking over the gayeties, comparing experiences, and discussing the boys, I remarked upon the exceeding gentleness of my uncle's tones in speaking to them.

"But he is always gentle," returned mamma.

"I can fancy his Italian wife must have adored him. He has a deferential courteousness to every woman that I have never seen equaled. Tell me more of his history," I said.

"You know as much as I do, my daughter. He married in Italy the daughter of a nobleman. He had one boy, whom he left with his father-in-law when he came to this country. His wife's sister also married and had a child, who was brought up with his own son, and after the grandfather's death, your uncle adopted him. The death of his wife must have been a great grief to him, for he has never referred to her in the remotest way, and now he takes for granted that I know the particulars, in a way that prevents my asking. The result is, I know very little. When he came home he had a look of woe which it was distressing to see, and a gentleness that was so touching I used to feel my eyes filling with tears whenever he

spoke. He did everything before your father died to relieve his mind, and has made our burden of dependence so light that I often fancy myself mistress of the whole domain. I think it is fortunate for both of us that the heir has come."

I laughed and replied: "He has not proved as disagreeable as I feared. There does not seem to be any sort of self-assertion in Victor. Roland is more disposed to play lord of the manor."

"They are all delightful, and the elder Victor's quiet satisfaction in his boys is fascinating to me."


"Mamma," said I, presently, "did you notice that strange flush that passed over Uncle Hartley's head and face at dinner yesterday?"

"Yes, I have seen it often. I am very anxious about it. He is a young man to have the infirmities of age. He is prematurely old. He was old at thirty-five."

At this point, and to my great vexation, Miss Ramsay and Ellen drove up, and we left the table, over which we were lingering.

I had so much to say to mamma, that these tiresome chatterers had never come at so inopportune a moment.

They were so enraptured with our new gayeties that they "would die" if they could not talk them over. In view of this catastrophe, I prepared to listen to Ellen's rhapsodies, and she and I seated ourselves on



one of the steps of the piazza. At that moment Victor appeared. Ellen pinched my arm that I might observe the remarkable coincidence of his arrival so soon after hers, but was a little disappointed when he said :

“ Papa sent me, Mildred, to ask you to come up and sing to him. He seems very tired to-night. Perhaps, as Miss Ramsay is here, she will accompany you. I would not disturb you with his message, had he not said, ‘ My heart longs to hear her.’ ”

“ Certainly,” said I, for an inexpressible tenderness had risen in my soul for my uncle, since the conversation with mamma. “ No, mamma, we do not need any wraps ; we will soon return,” I said, in reply to a shawl she offered me.

Ellen was only too glad to go with us, talking incessantly to Victor, whilst, but half hearing her, I walked on in silence. The words were sounding in my ears, “ My heart longs to hear her.” It was one of the poetical expressions common with my uncle, particularly if music were his theme. His whole being seemed absorbed when I sang. Once, when I poured out my whole soul in an Italian song of Italian love, he exclaimed, “ Ah, my child, you must have been in Italy ; how can one who has never seen its skies, never heard its sounds, know the inner meaning of those notes ? Nature has new expressions there. There is an element of fire in Italy. It may burn be-

neath the surface, it may burn soft and low, it may be subdued, but it is fire still ! Nothing is cold there, Milly ; hearts consume themselves, and love burns itself to ashes." He often talked in similar strains, and my singing seemed as if it answered some spirit need. My companions were forgotten. Suddenly Victor seized my hand, and drew me back, Ellen exclaiming, " You would have plunged headlong among the gold-fish, if Victor had not caught you, Milly."

I laughed, and thanked him, for it was true I was on the brink of one of the ornamental ponds. Quickly regaining my balance and my self-control, I ascended the marble steps of the portico. It was flooded with moonlight. In the shadow of a pillar, my uncle was sitting in one of his most luxurious armchairs, while Roland occupied another, close beside him. Victor wisely took Ellen to the Pavilion, and as I came up alone, Roland laughingly said : " We are two audacious men to send for you to sing for us, are we not ?"

" I came for *you*, at *your* request, Uncle Hartley," I replied, without smiling.

Roland was not to be suppressed, and answered : " At all events, I may listen, cousin mine ?"

I bowed assent, and not liking the weary look on my uncle's face, took a low seat beside him, and began the songs he loved. Song after song ! Wailing plaints of love, pleading notes of sorrow, intense tones of pas-

sion, grand jubilates of victory—he loved them all, and only spoke in a softly-murmured “Grazie.”

“Sing softly, he is asleep,” whispered Roland, coming beside me. I continued in a lower tone until I thought he spoke, and turned to answer, but he was dreaming, and his words were: “Nina, Nina, *anima mia.*”

We were silent for some time, then Roland told me that his father had a rush of blood to his head, and, after it, asked for his little girl. We concluded there had been too much company, or perhaps some painful reminiscence had affected him. Then my uncle woke.

“Ah, my children, I am quite bright now. Send for refreshments, Roland. Thank you, my little girl, you are my David.”

Victor and Ellen, who had been hovering near, came up then, and uncle was his own hospitable self again, talking as cheerfully as if he had not seen in a dream his dear Italy once more.

After fruit and wines were brought, and Ellen had, in her ill-bred way, exhausted all her adjectives upon an entertainment sufficiently simple to have passed unnoticed, I proposed to return. We left my uncle and Roland, reiterating thanks, while Victor escorted us back again. My mother looked relieved, an hour of Miss Ramsay being a severe trial. Then their carriage came for them, and we were once more alone.

Victor asked mamma if his father were subject to these attacks, told how frightened they had been when, after dinner, they saw the crimson tide overspread his face and head, and how he insisted it was "nothing."

Mamma said he had recently had several such temporary illnesses, but seemed the same as ever as soon as he recovered. "I am glad to-morrow is Sunday; he will be quite quiet," she added.

"Mildred has cured him this time," said Victor. "He may be able to go to church to-morrow. Roland will be with him; Miss Ramsay has engaged me." And a half shrug gave me the impression that Ellen's plans had not been entirely successful.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE SUNDAY AND MY UNCLE.



T was my uncle's custom to drive to church in a stately, old-fashioned family coach. It had a flight of folding steps to reach its preposterous height, and an elevated platform, nearly on a level with the roof of our piazza, from which the coachman surveyed the world. This institution always stopped for mamma and me. At ten o'clock the clatter of the steps was heard, and, well or ill, my uncle always descended and stood with uncovered head while we climbed in with what dignity we could command. It was my habit to make merry over the coach, and to interfere greatly with the devotional feelings that I told mamma she "got up for Sundays," but something had changed me. I looked with reverence on it on that Sunday morning, and could have worshiped the old man who so lovingly asked, "Is not my little girl going to-day? Will the good deeds of last night take the place of prayers?"

"I am sorry not to go with you, uncle; you have Roland to-day," was my reply.

He said no more; Roland only bowed; then, each giving me another salute, they drove off.

I stood idly plucking the withered leaves, that, since the thunder-storm, dotted our vines with dark spots ; presently I wandered slowly to my mossy seat in the woods. I was determined to "define my position" to myself at least. "A man with a mystery," I began, "is untrustworthy ; but why has Roland that clear, frank brow and fearless eye?" Unable to reconcile this, I went on : "What a masterful tenderness he has ; so different from the gentle, deprecating manner of Victor ; a dove suits him well, but Roland, —Roland should be attended by an eagle. He must have a magnetic power ; surely, something more than the society of two good-natured boys must have affected me." I did not recognize the coming shadow of a great love, though I am writing after I have known it, after I have yielded to its power I leave the word "shadow," for I have not used it to tell of darkness. There was once a "shadow of a great rock in a weary land," and its meaning was rest and peace.

There was a sound of parting leaves, a man's tread, a voice : "Alone at last ; why have you avoided me, Mildred?"

"Simply because I did not wish to talk with you," I replied, with rigid truth.

"Any other man would leave this battlefield discomfited ; but I am constitutionally brave, and curious to know, too, why you did not go with us to that lovely little church. I know Victor and I enjoy everything

here, father unreasonably—but—” and he looked inquiringly at me.

I did not feel as belligerent as usual ; there is a “Sabbath in the fields” as well as in the most orthodox of homes ; I could not do my own deeds and think my own thoughts as on other days.

“I wish I could go to church like other people, but I cannot sham piety.”

“Why must you ‘sham piety’ in going?”

“I am rather a religious girl ; I believe in most of the doctrines, but I hate to be told for what to pray ; and despise the people who look so sanctimonious on Sundays. I want a religion whose foundation is *truth*.”

“You certainly cannot object to ours on that score, its foundation is the highest truth.”

“Then the superstructure is made of remarkably frail materials. I hardly know a professing Christian who could bear a truth test.”

“Mildred, suppose a straight line is given you, and you are to draw one beside it, and like it. If your line is irregular and fails in its parallel, is it the fault of the model?”

“True, Roland, but is there not some radical defect in a religion that has such weak-kneed followers?”

“No more than in a physician’s prescription which a patient alters to suit himself. Whom would a looker-on blame, the physician or the patient?”

“You have clear ways of putting things. But it seems to me I could invent a religion in which there could be no mistake. I mean no self-mistake, as well as outward one. I hate people to think how good they are because they pray out of their lesson-books.”

“What do you mean by lesson-books?”

“Prayer-books, they call them ; and they sit in a row, with their Sunday faces, and their gorgeous bonnets, saying prayers which have no meaning to them.”

“Why do you say they have no meaning?”

“Because they are all printed down. One cannot feel according to rule. They are invented prayers, not prayers for a need.”

“Why do you not go to some church where a book is not used?”

“That is worse ; there the prayer is generally to the audience. I heard a man once tell the Lord he was sorry there were so few present, but He knew it was Saturday.”

“Horrible !” laughed Roland. “I prefer my lesson-book ; but that is an exceptional case.”

“I cannot pray printed prayers, they are made up.”

“No, Mildred, each of our prayers was once the expression of one man’s need. Once it reached high heaven from one man’s soul. Need, like much else, repeats itself. Surely, among our many prayers, both you and I can find our own hearts’ cry.”

Roland's words and reverent manner impressed me, but I made no reply, and he went on :

"I know not that I dare call myself a Christian ; but in the German school I have read and studied much, and after all that I have read to shake my faith, I have found that the claims of the Gospel are more easily accepted than reasonably denied. I find, for instance, that the miraculous birth of our Lord, which is denied, is in a book which also contains the account of His death, which is accepted. Contemporary evidence supporting the last, to my mind equally miraculous, I find no difficulty in believing the first. Then, I find Christ's religion meets all the wants of humanity. Take the present forms of Buddhism, or of other Oriental faiths, and only where they touch the spirit of Christ are they messages of hope to a soul darkened by sin."

I felt his meaning, but rallied my forces and replied : "Some time I will tell you my new religion."

"How is it to be preached?" he asked. "By fire and sword, or by faith and love?"

"By the lives of its followers," I said, thinking I had made a point.

"There cannot be followers, unless there is something to follow. A mere form of words will not suffice. Are you to be the new prophet?"

"I will expound and explain, of course."

"Begin here, fair Hypatia. You need not fear her

fate. Do you remember what Talleyrand said to Lepaux?"

"I never heard of Lepaux."

"He was a member of the French Directory. He desired to set up a new religion, but could not induce any to hear him. One day he consulted Talleyrand about his failure. 'I can tell you how to insure success,' said the great man. 'How, how?' exclaimed Lepaux, all eagerness for assistance. '*Be crucified, and rise the third day,*' was the answer."

I could make no reply; the power of that death and resurrection fairly overwhelmed me, and, striking me with its Ithuriel spear, I remembered my deception.

"Roland," I began, hesitatingly, "for days I have had a lie upon my soul" (I prided myself on calling things by their right names).

"*Mildred!*" and the horror of the tone rings yet in my memory.

"It is very hard to tell you, Roland, but I cannot live with myself any longer if I do not. That night of the thunder-storm—I knew what you did," and I burst into tears of inexpressible mortification.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "Now I can ask your forgiveness. I was afraid to do so before. I was not sure whether you knew or not. Your icy manner seemed as if you did—but—you were unconscious part of the time, were you not?"

“Of course I was. You can’t suppose I pretended to faint. I only meant just for a moment—just as I recovered,” and my face flamed with mortification.

He looked relieved—and then I heard the story of his love. From the first moment of our meeting he had loved me ; prepared by his father’s letters, he had rushed on his fate ; he tried in vain to control his expressions, tried to wait until he might have some reason to hope I would love him. I must forgive him for the weakness of that one night ; if I would only give him some hope, he would wait with all possible patience the response, he thought he would awaken in my heart. He talked rapidly, as if he would tell me all before I answered.

For a moment I forgot the past, and felt as if I were bathed in a melody of sweet sounds—and then—and then—I rose and replied : “This is quite impossible between us, Roland. I feel insulted that you have dared to speak such words to me. This is deliberate on your part ; you are speaking to my consciousness now.”

Never again may I behold such a look of amazement and dismay. He grew deathly white, then replied, in a voice he could not steady :

“There is some strange misconception on your part, Mildred. It can never insult a true woman to hear of the love of a true man. Your nature is too noble for such a thought. There must be a reason for

your words. Is it that you think I have only known you for three days? Nay, your image has been a year upon my heart. Have you never wondered why my father so often asked you for a picture of yourself? why he never seemed satisfied?—have you never wondered where all those pictures are?” He paused to take breath, and I said: “I supposed he did not like them, and they are destroyed.”

“I have them all, Mildred. I have you leaning against a marble pillar of the portico; I have you on horseback; I have you in your boat; I have you in the pavilion; I have you with King, the dog. When I told you how I dreamed of you on the terrace of Heidelberg Castle, I was marveling whether aught so fair could have a real existence. I was striving to put life into the form and features, and to have my answer there. I entreated my father to let us come home last year, but that grand old man, who loves us both so well, wrote: ‘Wait, my boy; you are both too young. I will not let my little girl be troubled by your wild love yet. She shall be free one more year.’ And I waited till I could wait no longer, and now three days have seemed three years till I could speak.”

“But—Roland,” I stammered out, “you are married!”

“*Married!*” and then he towered before me until I sank down in fear.

“Married! You tell me *that*, when you have

heard me say that I love you ! when I have asked you for *your* love ! Mildred, why have you done this ? It is I need explanation now."

With arms folded and eyes in which the light of love was quenched in a fire of anger, he waited.

I drew one long breath, and, in the very desperation of my position, took courage.

"You told Ellen Ramsay that your wife was in your room. The words were simple ; they are either true, or not true."

"*Not true,*" he exclaimed, "in the sense in which you have taken them—oh, how can I tell you !"

"There can be no difficulty in regard to a plain fact," I answered.

"If I could only explain the dilemma I am in, you would understand. It is not what my words to Ellen seemed."

"Then you said to Ellen what is untrue ?"

"True, and untrue—oh, have patience," for I had turned to ice at these words. "I saw Ellen looking through the curtain of my room, and knowing that she might have seen something which I did not wish her to see, I told her my wife was inside ! Oh, Mildred, not a human being was in my room."

"Who ate that lunch, then ?" and I despised myself for the question.

"Do you mean the day you lunched at the Hall, and that you met Prescott on the stairway ?"

“ Yes.”

“ I had ordered luncheon in my room, that I might continue to work on a little something I was making for papa. I heard *you* had come. Do you suppose I would fail to be by your side ?”

“ I cannot understand you, Roland.” The fire had gone from his eyes ; only earnest entreaty was there now.

“ I will not say I am not surprised that you should have put the slightest faith in this story. The whole thing is so impossible—”

“ Ellen said that Victor reproached you for your imprudence,” I broke in.

“ So he did ; and I am suffering for it now in a way I cannot explain to you.”

“ Perhaps we had better defer the whole subject till you can explain.”

“ No, Mildred, no—” and he paused a moment—
“ was this what you meant by something about a ‘ veiled lady ’ ?”

“ I do not know. Ellen saw a veiled lady, as she described her, enter the luggage entrance, and you followed her soon after.”

“ Ellen, again ! what a mischief-maker that girl is. I know nothing about the arrival of any one.”

“ The evening after the dance—”

“ Yes, I recall having met a carriage as I returned from my walk home with you, and I did go in

what seemed a private entrance. Remember, I am almost a stranger in my father's house, and a little new to his magnificent style of living. I knew nothing of a 'luggage entrance,' and I have made many blunders in trying to avoid both guests and servants. The latter have not the gift of keeping out of the way that servants have with us, but—now I have it, I did hear a great whispering as I went in that night, and saw a woman with a bonnet on. I think she was a new servant. I did not give her another thought. I found a box which I expected, and ordered it taken to my room. Then, being lost in the passages, I gladly accepted William's guidance to it. How we reached there, I do not know; we went up, and up, and round, and then down again."

"Yes, the defect of the house is that the front suites are only reached by the marble stairway, unless by a long detour."

"This was the apology Prescott made to me about meeting you that day of the lunch encounter; but let all that go. Can you not trust me, Mildred? Only a few days. Soon all shall be clear to you."

"Trust is born of faith," was my reply.

"And have you *no* faith in me?"

"You are unreasonable. Four days ago you were comparatively a stranger to me; your father has been my only informant in regard to you. It would not be unnatural if he were prejudiced."

“Not at all. I know papa thinks too highly of his sons. And have I to work out my own character ; will you believe nothing but what you know of yourself ? How many years of good behavior will satisfy you, my cool cousin !” he spoke bitterly.

I was offended now : did he expect me to give my life to him, a stranger ? But if I spoke, I could not be truthful, for in my heart I knew I was willing to do just this. I could have thrown myself into his arms, and have trusted him forever. Reason and judgment seemed dethroned. It was better not to speak. That was all I knew.

In a moment a gleam of mischief shot from his eye, and his bright, happy spirit reasserted itself.

“This is the danger of which I told you, Milly ; this is the precipice I feared. I have just escaped being a mangled corpse ; perhaps, on sober thoughts, I may construct a gratitude that life and hope are left to me.”

“You might have been better off if you had taken the final leap.”

“By no means. ‘A neck that’s once broken can never be set.’ I would rather live to fight another day. May I ask one question ? May I have one promise ?”

“How can I tell ?”

“The question is, have I a rival to fight against, as well as a world to conquer ?”

“You have not.”

“The promise is—and, oh, Mildred, grant me this—let me be to you a possible future; remember my solemn assertion, no earlier love or fancy has ever touched my heart—yours is the only image there. In a few days I will explain what only seems a mystery; until then I ask you to try to have the faith in me, that is to produce the trust.”

“I will promise to try.”

One look he gave me; it was as if he would carry away all that my features expressed; then I was alone.

I tried to think, but my thoughts took the form of some words I once heard: “The world is full of surprises.” My world, certainly, had contained a full share in the last four days. On the first, Roland had behaved like a lunatic; on the second, he magnetized me; on the third, I heard he was married, and he told me he had passed it with “a lady;” on the fourth, he told he loved me, and, at last, when I could no longer resist him, he fled as if a Nemesis were after him. Then I laughed as I said: “Roland, decidedly—*is* a lunatic.”

I went home to dream of my insane lover. I said I was tired, and went to my room, and, in a sort of desperation, shut out every ray of light; striving, by an effort, to shut out the outside world, that I might better concentrate my thoughts upon the regulation of my inner sanctuary. I took no note of time, till mam-

ma reminded me of the dinner hour ; and inquired whether anything was the matter with my eyes, that I was in a darkened room ? I threw open my shutters, without being able to give any answer. It had been an impulse, and mamma laughed about it, remarking, as we were seated at our little table : “ You have had rather an idle Sunday ; will you go with me to the Hall this evening ; your uncle wants you and his sons to sing hymns with him.”

“ Do the boys sing ? ” I asked.

“ I believe so,” returned mamma. “ I have heard Roland sing in his room.”

“ Mamma, who is Roland ? ”

“ My dear, have you lost your senses. Roland is one of your uncle’s sons.”

“ Which one, mamma ? ”

And then my mother laughed merrily.

“ Don’t remind me of the absurd position we are both in. I have tried to frame the question again and again. There is an impenetrable wall around your uncle’s past life, and I cannot ask either of the young men, without acknowledging that I do not know. They look alike, which is accounted for by their being the sons of sisters. I have taken the idea that Roland is the adopted son.”

“ So have I. You know I determined not to like the heir.”

“ How you can help liking them both, I cannot im-

agine. How carefully your uncle avoids the name of Victor--that is one of his odd fancies."

"I think it odder that he should say 'Vic.'"

"My dear child, he does not; he says *Ric*."

"No, mamma; Vic. I have noticed it repeatedly."

"My daughter, you are mistaken; I have heard the roll of the R."

"That, then, is stranger than all. I was certain that I was right. I do not see how I can be mistaken. Ellen thinks so, too. What can 'Ric' mean?"

"His second name is Riccardo; I saw it on a piece of music."

"Victor Riccardo, and Roland Victor; how idiotic to have such names. What do we know of them, mamma? I think uncle ought to have told us more."

"You might have known as much as I do, if you had ever cared to listen. Your uncle received constant letters from a sort of supervising tutor whom they had; he kept almost a journal of their sayings and doings. I have read nearly every letter; and, certainly, if the accounts were true, they added, to rather unusual talents and love of study, a wonderful simplicity and purity of heart and life."

"I don't believe in perfection; but why did you not prepare me before these meteors fell among us?"

"Try to remember how often I have proposed to read those letters to you; how often you have walked

away when your uncle said : ‘ Now, I have something to tell you about my boys.’ ”

“ True, mamma; forgive me.”

To my consternation, my mother burst into tears.

“ What have I done, mamma? What is the matter ?”

“ Nothing, my child, but what is right and good. I am unused to a new sort of gentleness that has come suddenly to you.”

“ Don’t take it to heart,” I returned, laughing. “ I fear my goodness is spasmodic. Come outside for our coffee ; this room is stifling.”

Bridget brought to us a delicious arrangement of coffee, syrup and the frozen froth of cream, for which our cottage cook was famous, and we enjoyed it, and the on-coming coolness, under our vines and roses.

It was the perfection of a summer evening, a Sabbath of nature. The whole wealth of June’s roses seemed poured upon our cottage, and a faint rustling of the leaves made music, as showers of the bloom fell round us.

“ Mamma, how luxuriously we live ; we have our little comforts here, and the troublesome part of life uncle takes care of.”

“ I notice,” laughed my mother, “ you always have an attack of gratitude when we have this coffee. Prescott can never quite equal ours.”

“ Am I in time for some of whatever this nectar

may be, that Prescott cannot make," asked Roland, coming up the path.

"Yes, indeed, and do not fail to acknowledge our supremacy."

Mamma was quite satisfied with Roland's interest in his coffee-cup; his demand for "more syrup—a little more cream—now, I must have more coffee," made us very merry.

"Like Sidney Smith's old coach, 'the immortal,'" said mamma, "new wheels, new axle, new body, new top, new pole, but the same old coach. I suppose you think you have only had one cup, Roland?"

"Only one, on my honor," he said gravely; "and now, although I do not at all need change of scene, I must propose our finishing the evening with papa. Victor has gathered all the hymn books, the organ is open, the music selected, and papa waits the coming of our prima donna."

The walk was lovely in the bright moonlight; my mother went on faster than we, and by some trick of legerdemain (I deny a pun), Roland managed to obtain possession of my hand, and when I tried to withdraw it quietly, he refused utterly to give it up.

"It is nothing, my dear, nothing; only a little idiosyncrasy of mine. I feel safer about that precipice when I am clinging to something firm and strong."

"Roland, you are absurd."

“I am ; I know it. I mourn my position, more than the samphire gatherers over the Dover cliffs—you shall see them some day—frightful, positively frightful ; they have only a rope ; if some friendly hand would only support them ; as I think of them—forgive me if I cling too closely—” and my hand had such a pressure that I would have screamed if my mother had been quite out of sight.

I had to laugh at him, and hardly regained possession of my property in time to return my uncle’s and Victor’s kind welcome.

Our evening may not have been unlike other Sunday evenings—passed in singing hymns ; but it has ever dwelt in my memory as one only of its kind. Even should my story grow too long, I must try to recall it, and tell why it seemed a glimpse of a time when life will be *Peace*.

The moon was pouring a silver stream of light upon the portico, entering the long windows, and flooring the music-room with its soft glory. To each one on whom it rested it gave a spiritual beauty ; no other light was needed, except beside the organ, where stood bronze figures, each with one extended arm holding a branch of wax candles ; some of these were lighted, and were like golden dots in a silver mist. Of the musical education of my cousins I knew nothing, and was utterly unprepared to find Victor a regular maestro. The grand old instrument was en-

tirely under his control, and the effects he produced, bewildering. He gave us wondrous accompaniments, singing all the while a clear, intense tenor. My uncle took the bass. Mamma added her rich contralto to my soprauo, whilst Roland, true to the versatility of his nature, sang anywhere that his fancy indicated, or if he thought we needed more instrumentation, brought in the horn or tromba, using them in a way and with a skill quite unfamiliar to our ears. As music, our performance was a success, and Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and many others of those inspired Germans, gave a meaning to our own beautiful hymns that was a revelation to me. I had often thought that words interpreted music, but this evening I learned that music gave a new and subtle power to words.

My mind was full of surging thoughts; life was opening new phases, new possibilities to me; these grand soul-calls were taking me to a higher sphere, even an heavenly; for the time I seemed to have risen above one of my chief joys, Italian music, with its full tide of emotion. Victor's dove fluttered towards him just at that moment, like a pure, protecting spirit; he caressed it with his exquisite gentleness, then placed it on the arm of the figure beside him, where the beautiful creature poised herself for the remainder of the evening, only moving to put her head on one side—as birds listen—when Victor sang.

“Now, my boys,” said my uncle, “sing for us some German hymns. I believe you understand the language, Mildred?”

“Enough to follow the meaning,” I replied. “The music will reveal where I fail.”

He looked pleased at the idea, acknowledging it with a faint smile : then asked for Rükert’s poem :

“Er ist in Bethlehem geboren.”

Roland extinguished the lights, and, with one hand on Victor’s shoulder, he still sitting at the organ, they sang this tribute to Christ the Lord.

“Now, my boys, Luther’s hymn ; the one which helped to clear away the mist overhanging the armies of Gustavus and Wallenstein :

“‘Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott.’”

It rang out from the clear young voices as Luther may have sung it when he entered Worms—for they sang it in unison, and as if from the one faith of the strong heart of its composer. Then, without prelude, but like a shout of victory, they sang the marvelous battle-song of Gustavus. The effect was perfectly overpowering. I will give a translation which I have since seen. Good as it is, it can never reproduce the fire of the original, as Victor and Roland gave it to us that *one—one*—Sabbath night !

"Fear not, O little flock! the foe who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and power!
What though your courage sometimes faints, his seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but a little hour.
Be of good cheer. Your cause belongs to Him who can
avenge your wrongs—
Leave it to Him, our Lord.
Though hidden yet from all our eyes, He sees the Gideon
who shall rise
To save us and His word.
As true as God's own Word is true, nor earth nor hell with
all their crew
Against us shall prevail.
A jest and by-word are they grown; our God is with us,
we his own—
Our victory cannot fail!
Amen, Lord Jesus, grant our prayer; Great Captain, now
Thine arm make bare—
Fight for us once again.
So shall Thy saints and martyrs raise a mighty chorus to
Thy praise,
World without end. Amen!"

Then my uncle pictured for us the scene, telling of the rolling drums and blatant trumpets, of the voices borne on the wind, and how Gustavus kneeled beside his horse and prayed his battle prayer—"O Lord Jesus Christ, bless our armies and this day's battle, for the glory of Thy holy name!" and then the shout of "God with us" from every soldier's heart, and then the onrush of the hosts!

“Gustavus fell that day,” he said; “but ere he died exclaimed, ‘I seal with my blood the liberty and religion of the German nation!’—a hero martyr. If my little band are rested, let us have Zehn’s ‘God liveth ever,’ and Ubland’s ‘Land where beauty will not fade,’ and whatever else tells of hope and joy.”

We all sang again; my uncle had retaken the seat from which he rose to tell us of Gustavus, and from that moment he became to me the central point of interest. I could not take my eyes from him; his whole heart was full of the subjects, and the hymns he chose were all of coming joys, or of that love that makes life possible. His eyes were bright, and sometimes both hands were raised in expressive thought; we gathered around his chair as we sang the last hymn, and our music went up to heaven on the bridge of glory that was lighted in its courts.

“*Mille, mille grazie*, my children. I have had a great joy to-night; it seems that I have passed a boundary-line—

“‘And spirits twain have crossed with me.’

I shall never have the like again.”

“You shall have it whenever you wish, papa,” said Roland, “if you will provide the moonlight.”

He made no reply; then, the always-ready Prescott brought our refreshments, and—real life began again.

I went outside, with Victor and his dove. We talked of music, and tried to define it ; but to-night it seemed to elude our slightest approach. At each trial, we defined its effect upon us, instead of music, itself.

We compared the rainbow hues with the notes of the scale, and talked learnedly of harmonies, till my mother's voice said : "Milly, your uncle has long ago retired. Roland must be weary of me—you need not contradict me, Roland—and we have watched for a pause in which to tell you that another day began some time since."

We started in surprise. "There has been no night," said Victor ; "how can it be to-morrow ?"

"It cannot," laughed mamma. "It is *to-day* ; and one must sleep, even if there is no darkness. The light is wonderful ; but you must close your shutters, and make a night."

They both walked home with us, Roland, fortunately, committing no absurdities, but comporting himself with praiseworthy gravity. "I am going to work all to-morrow," he said ; "but the evening is to be devoted to music and moonlight on the water—Miss Ramsay's suggestion."

"Then I can have a ride with you," said Victor.

"You could have had it for the asking, without any 'then,'" I answered.

"At eleven, without any 'then,'" he returned, laughing.

They bade good-morning, and as Bridget rubbed her eyes, she muttered : "Yees are keepin' dreadful hours, an' ye'll suffer for it; it's that same is me belafe."

CHAPTER V.

PARTLY EXPERIMENTAL.



T was not my intention to record every day's events, yet at this time each one held its especial point of interest, which I cannot pass.

My ride with Victor was very pleasant for both of us. I told him of my mistake about his name, and he replied that he had always been called "Ric;" it was his grandfather's pet name for him, and he could even now recall his childish pleasure when Roland first framed his baby lips to make the sound. "I am three years older than Roland, you know, and it is hard for me to give up the feeling of protection that I have had for him; but I suppose you see that Roland is self assertive, in its best sense, and is more likely to be the director than I. Perhaps it is weakness, Milly—may I say Milly?—but I think I like to be looked after. I have so missed a mother's love; I want a mother, a home—"

"A wife," I thought, "might fill all requirements."

"Yes, it may be a wife I want," he went on, as if he had heard my thoughts. "My little dove, my Hilda, is my wife. Papa's household wants a woman head. Dear old man! I wish he had let us always be with him."

"We have all lost much pleasure from not having you here before," I replied, much commending myself for my civility, and pleased that I could say this truthfully. Then we were attracted by seeing a fleet of boats, flagged and cushioned, and with men in a uniform sailor's dress, rowing them up the little river. We hastened to see them pass.

"What can it mean," I asked.

"It must be Roland's preparation for our party to-night. Papa has sent out extensive invitations, and Roland offered to attend to the boats; we want to improve each night of the moon."

"So far, each one has been a *fête*; this will be delightful," I replied.

"It is a relief to hear you say so, Mildred; we feared you did not enjoy it all as we did. Remember, we have never known a home since we were children. We feel like boys on a vacation, now."

"I was skeptical about having so many invited; I do so weary of people; but, Victor, I have enjoyed much—last night I will never forget."

"That was a bit of domestic bliss. It was great happiness to give papa so much pleasure. Roland and I are very enthusiastic about our father."

"You have cause. I have understood him better since you came, and loved him better, too. He was superb last night."

"Did you notice him when he stood up to tell us

about Gustavus? He reverences that old hero. But we were chiefly pleased to satisfy him in music, because he has spared no expense for our musical education. He told us we would have no need to work for our support—‘a great misfortune,’ he called our independence—but that he wished us to have each a pursuit, ‘an enthusiasm, if you can, boys,’ I remember was in one of his letters. Mine is music; and Roland’s is music and painting, and a little of everything. He has the gift of excellence in all. Papa looks in surprise at him, as he sings all parts, and plays all instruments.”

“But can he be perfect in all?” I asked.

“Perhaps not a master in each one; and yet I defy any one to find a fault in Roland’s performances. You know, we are Italian boys, and music is our inheritance—but here we are at the cottage. It is poetry to live here, with such a fair spirit as your mother for a minister. Do you know how enviable you are in this, Milly?”

“I know my mother is very dear to me,” I returned. “But come in, Victor, to luncheon.”

“I have promised to lead Black Beauty back; Philip was pressed into the service of the rowers. Papa would not allow us to have sail-boats.”

“He has two rules which I never disobey—one, to avoid a sail-boat, the other, never to go outside of the place alone. Am I not good, and obedient, and all that?”

"All that, and more," he laughingly returned, as he rode off.

* * * * *

At seven o'clock we met at the Hall, and were there divided into parties of six, eight, or ten, according to the sizes of the boats. Roland's executive talents were displayed on this occasion. I had given him hints as to the social difficulties of the neighborhood; but his quick appreciation of the positions, and the fascinating way in which he reconciled all parties, filled me with wonder. He was everywhere, bowing, smiling, and planning, yet every few minutes beside me, asking if I remembered my promise to go in his boat. I had made no such promise, yet I answered "yes."

Ellen Ramsay was in the wildest spirits, and captured Victor without ceremony, a proceeding which reduced Henry Dedham to the verge of insanity. He hovered around her, as if he could by no means understand his position. The elder Miss Ramsay was overwhelmed with fears, and could not feel safe unless in my uncle's boat. Pathetically she entreated: "If I am *very* frightened, *might* I hold your hand, *dear* Mr. Hartley?"

"*Both* hands, my dear madam," he returned, with the most profound of his superb bows.

"Like little children, when they go to the dentist's,"

whispered Roland, while the wise virgin was evidently preparing to be in agonies of alarm.

My uncle insisted that mamma should go also in his boat, evidently growing anxious as the spirits of Ellen's aunt became exuberant.

The Claphams and Trents, who ignored each others' existence, were carefully separated; and equal attention paid to two families, one of which was descended from a barber, and the other from the artist who decorated the barber's pole. Each claimed the highest aristocracy, and professed immense respect for distinguished ancestry. The descendants of the barber, however, dressed their heads in the cultivated wilderness style, lest, from undue care, a taint should be suspected; and the descendants of the barber's pole drove their horses tandem, so their pride of race was at least doubtful.

Many such inexorable necessities were planned for with marvelous skill, and then we all walked down to the pavilion, in the disorderly fashion in which a happy crowd of people do such things.

The hanging lamp of the little marble temple was lighted, so that no shadows should bewilder our footsteps as we descended to the boats. The music played softly while we embarked. First, Victor's boat, with the radiant Ellen, and Henry Dedham in deepest gloom; the music next; then the others followed without regular order, and last, Roland's—that he might save

those who fell overboard, he said; but they would have had a poor chance for safety, as his boat was my little Water Lily, and he was to be its oarsman.

“Roland, this looks so exclusive,” I remonstrated.

“It does, Milly, you are always right, and I cannot tell you how sorry I am; but there is not another boat; so, *cara mia*, you must try to be content.”

I was content, more than content, but did not see my path clear towards telling him so; he was already in irrepressible spirits, talking in the most absurd and boyish style.

The fleet of boats, with the gay party, the oarsmen dressed as stage sailors, the flags, the music, the glorious flood of silver light, formed a scene such as Aliris might have prepared for Lalla Rookh. There were no mishaps, nothing but pleasure on that bright night. Our little boat went in and out among the others, we talking and laughing as we passed. In going near my uncle's boat he asked me if I would sing with Roland; I could not refuse; the band was silenced, the rowers rested on their oars, while we added our part to the entertainment of the guests. As soon as our song was over, Roland avoided a second request by rowing quickly away, excusing our haste in the fear lest our boat would be sunk by the weight of the bouquets that might be thrown to us. Under cover of the laughter we escaped. Soon the music and gay sounds came to us only like echoes.

"Is not this perfect, Milly?"

"Simply perfect."

"We had no expectation of such a visit as this has been. Papa delights in making us all happy, and arrangements are easily made. William found boats and men, and Prescott has *carte blanche* for some grand effect on our return."

"Your father would invite the stars to a dance, if you wished it."

"Dear papa! I trust that I can give him what he most desires on earth."

"What is that?"

"If you do not know, I cannot tell, until I can explain my mystery."

"I can wait."

"You need not wait long. I am improving every possible moment to accomplish its elucidation. To-night I shall be up till dawn."

"Why, Roland?"

"Don't ask me, Milly. I am weak before any request from you."

"Why do you not play the cornet?" I asked.

"Because I best like old German music, in which there are no cornet parts. I can transpose; but my delight is to listen to the sounds, not to be obliged to think before I produce them. I play trombas and horns of all kinds. The French horn is my favorite."

"It is delicious in tone. You and Victor have been careful students."

"Yes, half our lives have been musical ; you and I will have years of pleasure in singing together."

"I hope we will long live to gratify your father."

"Yes, most dutiful of nieces, so do I ; but I look for your music for my own daily joy."

"You certainly have an extraordinary way of appropriating me. Remember, you are under a cloud."

"So I am ; I forget it. It is so excessively clear and bright on my side, I cannot realize the willful darkness of your position. You cannot escape me, Mildred. I shall wind a net about your footsteps. Oh, my darling ! Why will you make me wait ?"

"We had better return to the boats now."

"By no means ; you shall not put me off. Is there no truth in my voice ? Is there no truth in my eye ? Why will you not believe me ?"

"That there is truth in you, Roland, is why there is a mystery. If you were all false, I would need no explanation."

"A few days more I must wait. The reason I absent myself from you at all is, that I may hasten the end."

"Of course, I do not understand. Oh, look, Roland, at the rainbow in the little cloud beside the moon !"

“*Mille grazie, carissima* ; you tell me of hope and of promise.”

“It’s a very small scrap of a rainbow,” I replied, laughing ; “but take it if you like.”

“I accept it, then, as Dian’s gift to Cupid. The little god has gained one concession, and Venus has decked the bow with bright colors.”

“Stop, Roland, you are fairly blasphemous, with your *pot pourri* of gods, goddesses, and the type of promise.”

“Not so, Diana, mythology is history done into poetry. Some time, when we have long evenings together, I will tell you wonderful things, and explain why a late writer expresses a truth in saying mythology is to history what astrology is to astronomy. I am fairly overburdened with subjects to discuss.”

“You talk in a circle, Roland ; from whatever point we begin, you invariably come round again. Now, I *must* hear that cornet solo. Come !”

“Go, you mean. Use your power, fair Mildred ; some time, when I say ‘come’—”

“What ?”

“Things will be changed.”

I refused to say another word, for in whatever form I put either question or answer, Roland had but one theme. He rowed softly towards the party. All were listening to the music. It was unearthly, in the

stillness of the night. No one proposed to return, nor was there need to hasten.

"I will have to sleep all to-morrow to make up for it," said Ellen's voice as we passed her boat. In it, Henry Dedham was feebly trying to entertain Miss Jones, while Ellen was giving heed only to Victor.

Roland shivered as she spoke. "Why is it," he asked, "that some voices cut like a knife?"

"You and I are sensitive to sounds."

"Say *we*, Milly."

"No, Roland, I will not."

"Diana, my dear, the amount of patience you require from me is far beyond that exhibited by the interesting party who sits on monuments, making a joke of the miseries of her fellow-creatures—but—papa's boat is returning. Perhaps Miss Ramsay has driven him to desperation."

He followed quickly to ask if his father were tired.

"A little so, my boy. Do not let the others lose any enjoyment. We old people will be ready to receive you when you return."

The "we" reconciled Miss Ramsay to being classed among the old people, for she gave a cheerful assent, as Roland helped them from their boat. He and I decided to remain in the pavilion until the party all returned. "It will show our strength of character, my dear, although I really think the view from here is even more beautiful than from the water. Are your

skies more transparent than ours, or what makes this light so wonderful?"

"It is only the most glorious night I ever saw, and the most perfect for such a party."

"I hoped it was an American peculiarity—here they come."

Victor's was the last boat to return; then it was midnight; but what avails the iron tongue of time when joy is unconfined?

"It must be a mistake," said Mr. Jones, as the stable clock tolled the hour. "How can it be night, when the moon has not even winked?"

"How can she wink with a lidless eye?" whispered Roland.

Then we walked towards the house, talking of the "frozen music" of its portico, with its extended colonnades. I thought it quite the proper thing to do, before the congealed beauty of that superb mass of marble, till Roland said, with a shiver:

"I don't like 'frozen music;' one might as well love a frozen heart. Architecture has its voice; I don't believe in the eloquence of silence, even under such moonlight."

I only laughed softly, for Roland would not be Roland if Harpocrates had charms for him.

"It looks more like ice-cream," said Ellen Ramsay. "I hope Prescott will give us some."

We were brought back to practical life by that

speech, and soon made ourselves ready for supper, which was to be served in the conservatory, where crimson carpets had been laid on its tiled floor. This great glass-house opened from the dining hall, and as we reached the steps leading down into it there was a universal exclamation of surprise and pleasure, we having by no means attained that sublimity of refinement, known by the suppression of our emotions. When we liked things we said so, especially Ellen Ramsay. The flowering plants were already removed to the grounds, but the oranges and lemons were inside, with some rare varieties of palms, bananas and gigantic ferns. The tables were skillfully placed among them, and decorated with fruits and flowers, placed around ices molded in every form that art could devise. Over all this beauty the full glory of the moon poured through the crystal dome. The additional light needed came from lamps, with pale amber shades, each looking like another moon, or from small candelabra in the shape of plants, with glass cups representing flowers, in which were lights. The genius of our "prince of butlers" was never better exhibited; he spared no pains to produce "an effect," and there came a time when even I appreciated the conscientious service, so "faithful over a few things."

"This is supper done into poetry, *cara mia*," said Roland; adding, in a low voice, "but we cannot live on beauty. I am hungry, mein Herzchen. I rowed

my own boat, you know, with a marble statue at the prow."

"This way, Mr. Victor," murmured Prescott's voice, indicating a table evidently prepared for him, where the ice cream was in the form of a dove; and near it, serenely balancing herself on an orange bough, was Hilda, contemplating her frozen companion. She flew to her master for her usual caress, and no blandishments from Ellen could attract her from him. The raptures of this expressive young lady were too much for Roland. "Neither bravery nor moral courage avail in a case like this," he said. "I can bear anything better than a false note."

"You are tuned above concert pitch," I returned; "come down to the general level." And illustrating my words, I left the table he had chosen—one that commanded the scene—resolutely taking a seat in the most crowded part of the room. I was rewarded by finding upon our table a representation of Danneker's Ariadne, more beautiful than even Victor's dove.

"I am still hungry," said Roland, looking savagely at the ices. Fortunately, solid refreshments were brought to us at that moment of his despair, and, helping himself indefinitely to *patès*, he offered me Ariadne's little finger! "A hard-working man cannot exist on a Barmecide feast; but you, *mein Liebchen*, need small restoration," he explained.

"Am I not rather tall for a *Liebchen*?" I asked,

insisting on sharing the "restoration" he chose for himself ; "or does 'little love' mean a measure?"

A retort was ready ; but my uncle stopped to speak to us then, his face flushed, and his eyes weary, but with a tender tone that went to my heart. "Has it been a pleasure to you, dear children?" he asked. We expressed all that was possible, and begged him to leave us to take care of the guests. "Presently," he said, going around to all the tables, before he took our advice.

My pen lingers on this part of my story, for not long after, "the sun was covered with a cloud, and the moon gave not her light."

CHAPTER VI.

“A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN
A BUSH.”



HE felt rather anxious about my uncle, whose weariness could not be concealed ; but in the morning a note from Roland, found on the breakfast-table, told us his father had passed a quiet night, and was as well as ever again. So we put aside our anxiety, and said, “It was fatigue ; that was all.”

“It was a great deal for him,” said mamma. “Miss Ramsay was very exacting, giving faint shrieks whenever she could find any pretext for doing so, and requiring to be assured, and re-assured, of her safety.”

“Did she capture his hands ?” I asked laughing.

“Neither hand nor hands, I am glad to say. Your uncle contrived to be occupied with my shawl whenever peril approached him. I never had it changed so many times for my comfort in my life before. It all tired him, though.”

“Dear old uncle !”

“Dear, certainly, but not old. Who is coming ?”

Ellen drove up in her phaeton, calling me to come out to her.

“I have shoals to tell you, Milly ; if we drive, no one can disturb us. Come, I am in a dilemma, and must have your advice.”

At this I put on my hat, and took my seat beside her.

“ Oh, Milly, was there ever anything so perfect as last night ? I am so glad I thought of it. Victor gets up every party I propose. But what *shall* I do ? Oh, Milly, tell me !”

“ Do ? About what ?”

“ About Victor and Henry Dedham. I forgot I hadn't told you. You see, I am perfectly bewildered. I hoped to keep Henry on till I was sure about Victor, but he, Henry, was so exasperated by Victor's devotion, that he plunged right into it yesterday morning. He said he had loved me for ever so long—you know the kind of things men get off—and he would not wait any longer ; talked about suicide, and all that humbug—”

“ ‘ Spak o' loupin o'er a linn, ' I suppose, ” said I.

“ I haven't the faintest idea what you mean, Milly, you are so odd ; but he said I was permitting attentions from Victor, and that he *would not* stand it.”

“ He stood a good deal last night, I think.”

“ Yes, poor soul. I was awfully sorry for him, but it was my last chance. I ran the risk, and just tried Victor. I was the most to be pitied, for Victor was in

one of those jolly, boyish moods, and I couldn't get any sentiment out of him."

"Did you try?" I was skeptical about Ellen's sentiment.

"Yes; I talked moon, and that stuff, as much as I could; but no matter what I said, he turned everything into joke."

"What did you expect him to say before a boat load of people?"

"Nonsense, Milly; sometimes I think you are a baby. Couldn't he have whispered '*Ellen*'? I would have known in a minute by his tone."

"Rather an unsafe dependence, I think."

"I know what to trust. If he had said a word, I'd have thrown Henry overboard at once."

"What! and drowned him?"

"Milly, you are outrageous—figuratively, I mean. Now, don't you think I was the most to be pitied?"

"Ellen, do tell me *what* you mean; for *what* are you to be pitied?"

"Oh, dear! I believe in your good sense, Milly, but I do wish sometimes you had more experience in love affairs. Don't you see, now, I will have to marry Henry, and let that splendid Victor go. It's *perfectly dreadful*."

"I do not see why you need marry Henry. Have you promised to do so?"

"Partly—on the 'bird in the hand' principle. I

was afraid quite to let him go; I put all on last night's trial, but I must say I am not at all satisfied with Victor's manner. If I were it would be different."

"Vastly," I replied, with a creeping feeling of disgust. "But whom do you love, Ellen?"

"Nonsense; 'how happy could I be with either, were other dear charmer away.'"

"If you are sincere in asking my advice, Ellen, I entreat you not to marry any one if you feel it a possibility to marry any one else—in other words, unless you love."

"That, my dear, is all right, as advice; exceedingly proper and school-ma'amy—but there are other things to be considered. I might love a man who did not love me; now, in this case, Henry really loves me, and—I don't *dislike* him—he is a little prosy and namby-pamby sometimes, but I suppose I have my faults, too. He has money enough for comfort, promised to travel abroad, and all that sort of thing—but, oh, dear! Victor *is* magnificent. I thought last night, when his glorious eyes were dancing with that sort of inconsequent merriment of his, that I could have worshiped him. Henry looked so lumpy! Then that superb old place; and Aunt Ellen says he has a palace in Italy. Oh, was there ever a girl in such a dilemma."

"Perhaps Victor is engaged," I suggested.

"That is my chief trouble, but it would explain everything. Let me see—one week—Henry gave in in three days, last April, and I must acknowledge Victor has not gone farther than generalities. Do you know anything about it, Milly?"

"I do not," and I was amused to think how little I really did know.

"What would you do, Mildred?"

"I would not wait for Victor."

"Then, I suppose, that means take Henry."

The coarseness of the whole affair had brought on one of my rages. I was vexed to think I was not cured.

"I mean *nothing*," I said. "I have no sympathy in your dilemma. I do not say 'feelings,' for you seem to be destitute of them. I have no advice to give you."

"Well, Mildred, I *did* suppose you would take some interest in my affairs. I am sure if any one were attentive to *you*, I would be delighted. The men never seem to hover around you as they do around me. To be sure, I am two years older—by-the-bye, have you had a glimpse of Roland's wife yet?"

"I have not."

"Gracious! Mildred, how exasperating you are with your 'have nots' and your 'do nots.' You surely must have been often enough at the Hall to see her if you had chosen to take the trouble. I don't under-

stand how Roland can be so light-hearted with such a secret to keep. He may have told his father."

"Told what?"

"Certainly, Mildred, my patience will not last much longer—told his father about the mysterious arrival of his wife, and his keeping her shut up in his room. Of course, I mean *that*."

Fortunately we were nearing home, for I dared not trust myself to speak.

"Oh," whispered Ellen, with a pinch that nearly made me shriek, "there is Victor. No, on my life, I believe it is Henry. I was afraid to see him this morning, and rushed off before he dared to come. What shall I do? I must tell him something."

The case was beyond my help. A moment more, and the subject of our conversation was helping me to alight.

"Oh, Henry, I am enchanted to see you," exclaimed Ellen. "I waited for you till I was tired; then came for Mildred. Get in now, and drive me home. Posy has nearly pulled my arms out of their sockets."

By the gleam of happiness that overspread the face of her lover, I knew Ellen's misdemeanors would be ignored, and by the comical look of distress that Ellen gave me behind his back, I knew she had in that one moment given up Victor and Hartley Hall.

So it proved; the engagement was announced the next day, and never again did we see Ellen without

her shadow. As is often the case with weak men, Henry Dedham, from being a most lenient and forgiving lover, became one of the most exacting; his espionage was perpetual, and, to the liberty-loving Ellen, intolerable. She soon wore a weary and indifferent look, as if her strength to resist had failed; but gave no other sign of regret at having acted on "the bird in the hand" principle.

As they drove off, and Ellen's voice was happily lost in the distance, I thought of Roland's words about the "false note," and saying to myself, "there were giants on the earth in those days," I sought my rocks, longing to do positive battle with deception in every form. Some hours passed, trying to fancy a perfect earth. I had not learned the lesson that *Lucille* sought to teach me, for I strove rather to sweep and garnish my world, than to fill it with the actual good of "love and duty."

In this vain endeavor, and in the ever-real delight that I experienced in the beauty surrounding my retreat, I forgot the hour of luncheon, and might have remained till dinner time, had not Victor appeared with a handful of notes.

"See, Mildred," said he, "the people have risen, the country is in agitation;" giving me an open note, with several addressed to myself.

"The worst has come," I replied; "fortunately, I have established such a character that I would more

astonish our neighbors by acceptances, than annoy them by refusals. These parties are for you and Roland."

"Papa said simple civility required us to accept, and that we would doubtless be delightfully entertained; your dear, kind mother and we boys are to go; I came on a mission of entreaty to you."

"Useless, utterly. I will take care of Uncle Hartley. Then, Victor, we are to lose these last moonlight nights?"

"On our own place, yes; unless we can have some music when we return, or a stroll—but that will be too late. If you really will not go with us, invent some new pleasure that we can enjoy together in the day time."

"I have a little scheme, which, if you like, we will try to-morrow. There is a trout stream about ten miles from here. On a hill near it, or rather near the best place for fishing, my old nurse lives. She is a capital cook, and will give us a dinner of trout, and other *combustibles* (to quote my Exile of Erin), that will vie with Prescott's best efforts."

"That sounds better than anything we have had yet. Shall we ride or drive?"

"Drive; then we will not need attendants. We can go in the picnic wagon, so that we can be together. Shall I ask Ellen?"

"Nay, fair cousin, pray let me have this party in-

peace. Roland and I long to be boys again. Papa's entertainments require dress coats and high dignity."

Victor always put me in a good humor, and it was pleasant to have proposed something new and attractive ; so in high spirits we went to my uncle, to persuade him to accompany us. He assented, with the proviso that no one was to hold his hands. We gave the required assurances, then sent William with the necessary messages to old Juno, among which were explicit instructions to prepare our dinner in the oak grove.

"Have you anything for this evening, my children?" asked my uncle, in the first pause of our incessant talking.

"Nothing but to be with you," I replied.

"Then," said he, "will you give me some music in the Pavilion? I will send down comfortable seats ; marble chairs belong to an earlier stage of my life than this. By-the-bye, where is Roland?"

"Working, papa, as if for his daily bread ; day and night, he hardly stops."

"He must rest to-morrow. Will you stay to dinner, my little girl?"

"Thank you, no," I replied. "Mamma has not seen me for hours ; I must return to her."

Victor walked home with me. "You looked troubled when I found you, Milly. Had the giants risen again?"

“Yes, I believe so ; I have forgotten now. Ellen Ramsay vexed me ; she makes me despise the genus girl.”

“She is only silly ; don’t be hard on her.”

“As if to be silly were not a crime !”

“Not exactly ; a great deal is done and said from inconsiderateness. Thought comes later to some than others. I wish you knew a friend of mine, a German girl ; she lives entirely out of herself, and yet a brighter, happier being never existed. From morning to night she sings. She is an incarnation of joy.”

“Where is she ?”

“In Heidelberg. She is the daughter of my old master. He educated her thoroughly, and she is a perfect musician. Yet, with all these elements of power, and a remarkably executive nature, a gentler being never existed. She first considers, and provides for, her father’s comfort, then for her dependents ; for she has an army of little girls and boys, who live in the light of her love. Some she teaches ; some she employs in her garden ; some she sends to school. One day I sought her in all her usual haunts ; and, finally, in a secluded arbor I heard voices. There she was, with a row of comical-looking little girls before her, in their stuff dresses and caps, all knitting, and singing to the click of the needles. She gave me no heed, till the hour was over ; then, my reward for waiting was a reproof, for seeking her ! Every hour is occu-

ped. I once remonstrated, and entreated her to rest. She repeated to me a German couplet, which has the same meaning as the familiar one—

“A want of occupation is not rest ;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.”

“Is she not rather fatiguing for a permanency?”

“I have never tried her for a permanency,” he said, laughing ; “but so far, even in her busiest hours, she rests me. She has a sort of protectorate for stray and dilapidated animals, and humanizes them in an odd way ; they are on the most confidential terms with her. When I bade her good-by, whatever sentiment I might have infused in my farewell was lost, in the attention necessary to Diana, who had been shot whilst hunting ; and to Nimrod, whose foot had been stepped on by a horse, and who held it up pathetically, just as I was about to kiss the hand of his mistress.”

“Does she own the creatures?” I asked, laughing at this.

“Simply for the time of their cure. Her fame has gone out among the animals very extensively ; for one evening, when we were peacefully singing together, a strange and loud, whining call took us to the porch ; there stood a torn and famished dog, between two of the neighbors’ dogs, who had evidently led him to this refuge. Their united howls were their way of telling the story of their wants.”

“What did she do with them?”

“She first patted their heads, then quietly took down a large waterproof apron, which hung beside the door; she put it on—it has large sleeves, and covers her dress entirely—and requested me to tie it for her; this I did, obediently and meekly. She then took the bleeding animal up in her arms, and carried him to her hospital, in an outhouse; the two dogs followed, and there, with the assistance of her humble servant, who lives to tell the tale, she washed the wounds, bound up the torn flesh, gave the poor creature water—for, like wounded soldiers, dogs suffer an agonizing thirst at such times—then laid him on a bed of fragrant hay. His gratitude was most touching, and the interest of his friends in all her proceedings, one of the most curious things I ever saw. They watched intently; and, when satisfied with the condition of the dog they had brought to her, visited the several beds of their other friends and comrades, then returned, wagging their tails in evident commendation. ‘They are doing nicely,’ said Hilda.”

“Hilda!” I exclaimed.

“Yes, my dove is named for her. The dogs seemed to assent; then Hilda thanked them for bringing Nero to her, patted their heads, saying gently, ‘Good dogs, go home now.’ Off they went, I am sure understanding every word she had spoken. It was the most decided proof I ever saw of animal intel-

ligence. The other interesting invalids whined until she laid a white hand on each head, and spoke with her tender voice of interest; not one had dared to come to her; the discipline is perfect; no tail wags without permission."

"How very extraordinary. Has she only a dog hospital?"

"Unfortunately for me, all animals share her care, except those of what we ignorantly call 'the higher nature,' though, perhaps, if I were carried there with an assortment of broken limbs she might attend to me."

"I have no doubt of it, Victor. Comfort yourself that the greater the need, the more certainty of her care. Women develop strange differences; some must strive to relieve suffering; it is a necessity of their natures. Others close their eyes and hearts to it from a selfishness which they term sensitiveness."

"Of such stuff as Hilda are sisters of charity made," he replied. "While I could not too highly commend her devotion, I was often jealous of the claims upon her time. It was not gratifying to my vanity to be the last one considered. However, I had many more hours with my good old master, than if Hilda had been at liberty. He was Kappel Meister once, and is one of those born musicians. Every expression of music seems natural to him; he can play on almost

any instrument, though the organ is his delight—but I must be wearying you with all this.”

“On the contrary, you have interested me extremely. Come in now to our quiet dinner, and be relieved from Prescott for one day.”

“*Grazie*, I will come; but why you so dislike that prince of butlers, I cannot imagine. The fairy-like entertainment of last night should have made you grateful.”

“I am grateful for the perfection of his work, but he protests too much, and has a dash of contempt for everything American, which I feel, and which prevents my forgetting his presence. I like servants to act like machines. Prescott listens and thinks.”

“Not a very serious charge, for a human being to whom we owe so much comfort; but, forgive me; I have a way of commenting on you, dear Mildred, for which I ask your pardon.”

He had noticed, it seemed, my ready change of countenance. I did not like to be found fault with; but I recovered myself instantly.

“Mamma,” as she came to the piazza, “did you think I was lost—and can we have dinner now? I will be ready in ten minutes.”

We had a bright little dinner together, after which our iced coffee refreshed us, and then we returned to the Hall; a part of the evening programme being to

see the moon rise *out of the water*, as she would do at eight o'clock precisely.

Uncle Hartley and Roland were already in the pavilion. "There is only one position from which we can see," said Roland, "here, on the steps. Come; watch patiently, and Diana shall cast her golden pillar on the wave, for you."

We took our places on the marble steps—cushioned by my uncle's thoughtful care—silently watching till the round disk of gold rose out of the great deep; then, in a moment, as if by magic, the golden pillar stretched its length across the water.

"Try to fancy seeing that for the first time," said my uncle; "we are so surrounded by beauty, that we take it as a thing of course; we can hardly imagine a first sight of that rising moon. Do you remember the bewildered amazement of the astronomer when the light of one of the suns blazed suddenly into his telescope? Light is a mystery. One cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; then, think of its life-giving properties, its divisibility, its colors, its rapidity of motion; and, my children, have you ever thought of it as a revealer of truth? What 'sham' is there that light will not detect? It is a revelation, too. There is a world of thought needed to comprehend such words as 'The Life was the Light of men.' Mildred, my dear, will you sing for us Haydn's 'Fourth Day'?"

One of my uncle's peculiarities was to talk on in an emotional strain, and then suddenly to change the subject before a reply was possible. It was as if some thought were suggested to him, which he did not dare pursue. So his stupendous request came upon me rather startlingly. It would be no easy matter to sing the long recitative in the open air, but I knew my uncle had no idea of musical difficulties; he was once much surprised that I declined to sing "Bel Raggio" for him when we were both on horseback, and Black Beauty taxing all my strength. This evening, secretly congratulating myself that he had not asked for "Casta Diva," I replied :

"I will try, uncle, if you will all come in on the chorus."

"We will, of course," he returned. "Boys, you know 'The heavens are telling.' We may have a little the advantage, as we studied the oratorio last winter."

"And the trio?" I asked.

"Yes, Cecilia, my dear," replied Roland, "Ric and I are prepared to amaze you with our performances."

I could not waste my breath with the laugh that Roland's absurd way of talking always produced, but did my best for those I loved. I made what I thought a very skillful change in leaving out the first part, which begins "In splendor bright is rising now the Sun," and dashing boldly, after an original prelude,

into the "softer beams and milder light" of the moon. I had no idea it would be noticed. The boys came in on the trio, and the chorus, led by Victor, was given in fine style.

"Thank you, my child ; thank you all a thousand times," said my uncle, with a depth of feeling in his voice that would have repaid me if I had sacrificed my gift of song to him. "Haydn's power in uplifting the soul is something miraculous. How true his conception of contrasts in telling of the planets in recitative, and not bringing in the melodious harmonies until the combination of their movements."

He leaned back in deep thought, or in some soul-communion we could not share. After a few moments' silence, Roland whispered :

"Why did you skip the sun, Cecilia?"

"Because he has nothing to do with the night."

"Hasn't he? I'd like to know who lights Dian's lamp for her! Apollo works day and night for us; his extreme self-abnegation alone induces him to back down occasionally, and give Luna and the stars a chance."

"I deny it," laughed Victor. "He goes down head foremost, and jumps off the edge of the world, in utter recklessness of what becomes of us. If Luna did not hold her mirror just as she does, he would leave us in darkness."

"Ric, my boy, this frightful accuracy of yours

will destroy all the poetry of our lives. Soon you will assert that Luna holds her mirror so that Sol can see to shave."

"What incorrigible boys!" laughed mamma. "We want more music; you can talk when we are gone."

We straightened our faces, and began again. We sang alone, we sang together, in parts, in unison, Italian songs and German hymns. Through it all, although I had no reason to complain of Roland—for no outward sign told that I was more to him than to Victor—yet, what I call his "magnetic power" surrounded me with his watchful care. I never yet have been able to define the feeling that I have still, in Roland's presence; it is as if I were safe; as if I were thoroughly protected; as if I could revel in dreams and imaginations, in utter forgetfulness of that which I call *myself*.

When my uncle was tired, mamma and Victor went with him to the Hall; but Roland and I remained. The golden hue of the rising moon changed to molten silver, and the Water Lily was asking us to take her out among the glancing stars of light, that covered the water as with a robe.

"See, Mildred, the Lily comes to the very step—such a beseeching little plaint; we must take her where she can play among the floating stars."

I had no wish to refuse, and we were soon rowing down the stream to the river, down the river to the

Sound, and out upon its open waters. By water we were several miles from it ; but in a direct line the distance was short ; and it was across a strip of low land that we had seen the moon rise.

It was very beautiful "outside," as we called it, when we passed the bar, at the entrance of the river ; and we had a quiet, pleasant talk, with less drifting than usual toward personalities. Presently, Roland asked : "What is shining around your neck, *caramia*? Something gleams from the folds of your shawl."

"Only gold beads," I answered.

"It is odd, but my first memory of noticing anything is of my delight in the gold beads that my nurse wore ; first her beads, then her scarlet head-dress," he said.

"How picturesque ! We do not have such bedecked nurses here."

"Ah, my nurse was a picture ; my mother died before my memory, you know." (I did not know, but said nothing.) "And one day I noticed the beads around my *balia's* neck. How proud she was ! Then the ribbons—they all wear scarlet head-dresses. Then I saw Ric's eyes, and when I could speak I said, 'big eyes'—in Italian, of course. I was a linguist from my birth."

"Wonderful boy ! Did you tell the nurse that the English was 'big eyes'?"

“No, I reserved that for you. Then, one day, I understood what the nurse had several times said. I remember the knowledge of its meaning dawning upon me, ‘Your eyes are the biggest.’ Then I cried, for I thought Ric’s were large enough. Then I took Ric in, entirely. He was more than four years old then ; and at first the *balia* taught me to say ‘Unole ;’ then my grandfather began to take distinctive form in my brain, and he said, ‘Nonsense, call him Ric.’ Then I began to see the statues and pictures in the long gallery ; then a crowning joy at the fountain in the court. I suppose, at first, a child sees no wonder in the rising and falling water ; very little experience teaches that it is supernatural ; then it becomes interesting.”

“How odd to analyze your mind’s growth.”

“Yes, I have often thought it over ; then a new being loomed up. I had learned all my surroundings before I saw my father. He was very attractive to me ; I loved him ; and then, one day, he was gone. I must have been five years old before I saw him again. He used to come and go. Ric and I lived on in the old *palazzo* with our white-haired grandfather. We had all sorts of teachers, and an English child to play with ; so that we soon learned English. After a while, we went to school, but I suppose we learned some evil thing, for we were taken away, and teachers began again—an English tutor among them. He taught us

to read our Bibles. Then our dear old grandfather died, and our tutor told us the mystery of death and the resurrection. He was our dear friend, as well as teacher. Then father appeared again, and life and education went on. Our tutor was a sort of superintendent of all our affairs. At last, we went to Heidelberg. I told you where we lived. It was a simple life. We seldom joined the other students, except at lectures, but were taught that we were to work hard, so that we could go home. That was our goal. To two homeless boys, it was a great one. Music we studied thoroughly, and it was our recreation. We had horses too.

“ Then there came a time when my father began to write of his little girl ; then pictures came, then I fell in love with an ideal, and, *carissima*, you know the rest ; and, lest I should disturb your serenity, we will return without my telling you my dreams of how my future life will pass, and with whom. Sing to me, *carissima*, while I row up against the tide.”

I sang. I liked it better than talking, and in about an hour of rather hard work for Roland, we were on the steps of the pavilion again. Mamma and Victor were waiting for us there. My uncle had retired, that he might be well for the morrow. Youth needs no such preparations, and knowing that for several evenings there were engagements, we lingered on our walk. I gained more details of Roland's boyhood,

for he was quite ready to tell whatever he recollected. It had been a protected life, missing only a mother's care, and the tenderness of a father's loving presence ; all else had been supplied.

"I am going to give to-morrow to you, Mildred. Papa says I must rest, but I shall work all night."

"Work—what *are* you doing?" was at last forced from me.

"Lace-making just now. You shall see."

"But you told me you were neither making nor mending lace?"

"Themei, my dear, you have an inconvenient way of calling me to an account for my words. You were then asking about your robe ; I was not making or mending that exquisite fabric, but I am making another one like it."

"How many lace dresses does the mysterious occupant of your second room require?"

"I will give you two answers—one lace dress only, and yet I hope she will want a dozen more."

"Good night, Roland," was all I would reply to his heaped-up mysteries.

CHAPTER VII.

JUNO AND HERCULES.



HE excursion planned for this day met with more favor, if possible, than any of the previous entertainments. The truth was, each day's association drew us nearer. We were already a very happy family ; there were no giants in our midst, and the pleasant, unrestrained intercourse of unselfish and cultivated people was teaching me a lesson of human nature, that was destined to overcome my solitary communings, and to throw down some of my dearest theories. Probably, without being conscious of it, I really had needed the element of youth, to temper my dreaminess. The young people of our circle did not satisfy me. They talked dress, they gossiped, and treated love affairs with a coarseness that revolted me, so that my eccentricity was naturally developed, as a wall of protection. This fell before the open-hearted, fearless happiness of my cousins ; while the distant feeling of admiration, that I felt for my uncle, was changing into a warm affection. Roland's secret was my only trouble ; and every thought of wrong had been taken from it ; for the thought of evil, within the sound of his frank laugh, was impossible.

In an uncommonly good humor, I stood on our piazza, waiting the coming of the picnic-wagon. At ten o'clock it drove up. The boys were to take turns in driving ; and Hercules, or Harklis, as Juno called her husband, would attend to the horses when we reached our destination. I insisted on the absence of servants.

"We are going to try life under reduced circumstances. Themei, bring a checked apron," said Roland ; "if you knew as much as my little Gretchen, you would wear a woolen dress, and a cap."

"I'm glad I do not. I much prefer the blissful ignorance of my white *battiste*, with the thermometer at eighty degrees ; and I have not the slightest intention of waiting upon you," I replied, laughing, as I mounted the steps at the back of the wagon.

"What is this new name you have for my little girl, Roland ?" asked my uncle.

"Themei ? Ah ! papa, this young person is so overwhelmed with virtues, that I have to personify them, to avoid confusion, you know."

"But who is Themei ?"

"You never have seen her in this form, papa, though I am sure you know her ; she usually appears cut in sapphire, and dangling around the neck of the Egyptian high-priest. He was also the judge, and when he touched the criminal with this stone, secrets fled before the sapphire goddess. So with Mildred ; I

find myself confessing my inmost thoughts to her, and in striving to account for it, I know she is *Themis* herself."

We laughed at his nonsense, and my uncle's eyes brightened as our badinage went on. Victor was driving, and Roland's comical speeches and allusions knew no pause.

"I left Prescott tearing his hair," he said to me.

"I wish I had seen it in confusion," I returned. "He usually looks like a prime-minister."

"Yes, if perfection of toilet always characterizes these officials. But you are hard on Prescott; he is miserable enough to-day to afford you exquisite satisfaction."

"What has happened to the chief of butlers?"

"We refused to bring the hamper of delicacies he prepared. 'No,' said I, 'Miss Hartley is giving us this party; she will order the dinner.' 'But, Mr. Roland,' he remonstrated, 'Miss Hartley cannot, in the woods, find what is needful.' I shook my head, as if determined on starvation and self-destruction; then he began to destroy himself, as I before told you."

"Roland, come and drive, before *Themis* is destroyed, too. I am tired," said Victor.

"Oh, Ric, you are afraid I will commit some absurdity. Of all things, an elder brother is the thing I do hate," he replied, changing places with Victor. "You don't mind my using your vigorous expressions, do you, Milly?"

“Spice your tameness with them, if you choose ; I am reserving my wrath for one grand occasion,” I answered, laughing with the rest. But all this sounds like nonsense, in the repetition. I tell of it to recall those days of careless merriment. Victor was as full of boyishness as Roland, and long before we reached the cleared space by Juno’s cottage, she heard our merry voices.

Hercules, a stalwart negro, with a row of shiining white teeth, and eyes like jet beads on billiard balls, stood ready for the horses, in a position which seemed as if he expected to receive them in his arms ; his wife and queen, Juno, who had enlisted the entire rainbow in her toilette, was watching eagerly to give her heartiest welcome.

“Laws ! ain’t I glad to see yer ! Mas’r Hartlums, yer look prime. Dese am de boys, am dey ?” as Ric and Roland were announced. “Why, dey’s dredful grow’d. Mas’r Hartlums, you neber tole me dey was men !” and she looked with admiration at them.

“But, Juno, they were boys once.”

“Mus’ been dredful long time ago, den,” she said, standing aside for us to enter her neat little dwelling. “Here’s sum bread an’ cheese fer lunchums, an’ sum real good coffee. Laws ! ain’t I dredful glad to see yer !”

Roland was in agonies of amusement. “What

does it all mean, Milly?" he whispered. "Are they flesh and blood?"

I had only time to remember that our black population were a new experience to my cousins, when a fresh speech of Juno's nearly threw Roland into convulsions; she shouted from the back door, with such a voice as one might imagine possessed by the Sphinx:

"Harklis! Harklis! fetch me de *mik!* Am yer a curryin' dem horses back'ards, yer good fer notin' black feller?"

Roland bounded out of the window, and threw himself on the grass. We were such a merry party, that Juno, fortunately, had no suspicion that she was the cause of our laughter, and, as Hercules entered, she told him to "take de lunshums out to de young mas'r; de room is too hot for 'im," she explained. So, to Roland's astonishment, the woolly head of Hercules appeared above the tray, which he placed on the grass beside him.

"Take a drink ob coffee, Mas'r Hartlums. Juno's a dredful good hand at coffee; reckon yese tired wid de drive."

Roland reduced his features to the requisite gravity, thought he would "feel better soon; it's only a fit of cachinnation," he said.

"Massy sakes alive, dat's a dredful bad ting to have; de long drive's made it wus. Take mow hot

keem wid de coffee ; de dokters say dat kine ob sickness gibbs rite up wen yer takes dat reel hot."

Roland agreed with him, and proved to his anxious host that loss of appetite was not one of his symptoms. When Hercules brought in the tray, he explained to Juno, in a stentorian whisper: "Mas'r Hartlums is better. He's subjek to cats an' nashuns ; dey's sum kine ob fits ; dey makes 'im eat like all creation. Dat cures 'im."

"Massy!" said Juno ; "I'm glad we'se got enuf ob eberyting."

At this, Victor's so-far-successful efforts at composure failed, and my uncle spasmodically perpetrated a joke, to cover his shout of laughter.

"I'se dredful glad to see yer a joyin' yersefs," said Juno, returning to her duties as waitress. "Mas'r Hartlums is gettin' on."

"His illness is not very severe," said mamma, encouragingly.

"No," said Juno, "Harklis is a real good dokter ; he says, mus' make 'im eat ; it's *weekness*."

At this, compared with the overheard whisper, there was such reason to fear that poor Victor would soon have his brother's malady, that, with a struggle, my uncle asked about the trout.

"Oh, dey's bootiful ! dey's been a spectin' yer, an' dey's a playin' an' a frolicin' roun, a waitin' fer de hook."

"Poor things!" I exclaimed.

"Laws! Mis Meely, dey'll be dredful 'spointed ef yer don ketch 'em. Dey's tired to def ob swimmin' roun'; dey'd kill demsefs ef yer don't ketch 'em soon."

"Dey would, *sure*," added Hercules.

"We had better begin at once," said my uncle, rising; "their suicide must be prevented, if possible. Roland, are you ready?"

"Yes, papa; Juno's coffee will cure anything."

Juno's smile of pride was a sight that set Roland off again; it began with her eyes, attacked all her features, shook her shoulders, and then shimmered down to her feet.

"Mis Meely," she entreated, "hole back jes one minit; lemme show yer de table under de trees, fur de dinner."

The others went to the brook, guided by Hercules, while Juno and I walked to a beautiful oak grove, some distance back of the house. The trout stream, in its many windings, ran through this grove; and beside its musical waters, and under the dense shade, the table was standing. "Is dis de place ye had in yer mine, Mis Meely?" she asked.

"Exactly, Juno. We will have dinner at five o'clock; it is only one, now. That will enable us to be home by eight."

"Why, de moon is shinin' like it wus 'stracted now, in de ebenin's; ye'd better wait later."

"No, Juno; they are all going to a party to-night."

"Massy sakes! how ye wite folks does go on! Ye'd better be keerful ob dat delkat Mas'r Hartlums. I don tink Harklis is quite easy in his mine 'bout 'im."

"There is nothing serious the matter with him; he is as well as ever now."

Juno shook her head wisely, as if she would not disturb my false serenity, and we returned, meeting Hercules at the door.

"Dinner at five, Harklis. Mine yer hab sum fish *yersef*; de quality neber ketches notin' to speak ob. *Five*, Harklis, *sure!* to nebble 'um to git hum at eight."

Juno's oddities were ever new to me, and laughing at her orders to her adoring husband, I joined the others at the place of rendezvous. Mamma and Uncle Hartley were enthusiastic fishers; they were sitting, in solemn silence, side by side; Victor was stretched on the ground, holding a rod, and Roland looking anxiously for my coming.

"*Carissima*," he whispered, "they will not let me speak! I do not care to live if I cannot talk; take me where I can cast off these chains."

"Come, then," I replied, "I will show you a place so beautiful, that if talking will prolong your enjoyment of it, you will never cease."

"Such a place has been the hope of my life ; I am yours."

It was where the stream was laughing at the stones that tried to obstruct its progress, jumping over some of them, surrounding others with little silver rings, gathering its forces in tiny dark-colored pools for new leaps; and, in short, doing all those exquisite things that trout streams only know. The great branches of the trees met across the water, and here and there the flecks of light told us how the noonday sun was struggling for a draught of the "cool refreshment."

"No, Solomon," said Roland, looking up, "you cannot enter ; Diana and I are going to fish and talk."

"Solomon ! Who is he ?" I asked.

"Mildred, your darkness in classical matters, whether sacred or profane, it shall be my life study to remove. Solomon, to whom I refer, and who wishes to crowd himself in this leafy bower, was known among the profane ancients as Sol. I consider this name irreverent ; I give him his full title, Solomon, in all his glory. Is he not the King of Wisdom ?"

"Take breath, Roland."

"No, my dear ; breath is not needed—you have interrupted my train of thought. He *is* the King of Wisdom. Does he not speak to every tree, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall ? Are

not his songs a thousand and five, from the Memnon to that of Shakspeare's new-born babe ; who, regardless of weather, performed that remarkable feat of striding the blast ? How that child ever did it, I cannot imagine, but I know, when Solomon saw it, he gave it a piece of his mind that made it sing such a song that Mrs. Shakspeare never slept a wink all night—”

“ Oh, *do* stop beating your ideas up in this style—pray, Roland, is this a specimen of German education ? Do the teachers there throw their instructions in a great vat, and leave them to fermentation ?”

“ I suppose we are unconsciously influenced by the sparkle and foam—”

“ And froth,” I added.

“ Diana, my dear, we will fish.” We seated ourselves on a moss-grown rock, but were in too gay a mood to be successful sportsmen. One speckled beauty fastened itself on my hook. “ Oh, what shall I do !” I exclaimed ; “ poor thing—I cannot fish ; I would rather starve than catch another.”

“ Such being the case, Diana, I will confess to similar emotions. I cannot kill for amusement.”

“ Let us talk, then—”

“ We will, Diana. You say this, I suppose, as a clergyman says ‘ Let us pray,’ in the midst of what his ignorant congregation had supposed were petitions. ‘ Let us talk,’ by all means. Our ability to do this is unquestioned. On what topic shall we begin ?”

"I think," I replied, laughing at his nonsense, "your illness is a serious subject. Juno says that 'Harklis is not easy in his mind 'bout dat delkat Mas'r Hartlums.'"

"Oh, Milly! why did you not prepare me for these people? Hercules made a plunge at the horses, with a '*whoa, dar,*' when they were perfectly quiet, that nearly threw me from my seat. I turned and saw Juno. I thought her some surprise you had prepared for us, but when she became an animated rainbow, and spoke, it nearly took my breath away. I tried not to laugh, and, by only risking some blood-vessels, I might have succeeded, until her sudden shout to 'Harklis.' I could bear no more. Then the tender sympathy of the fellow for my illness, and his thorough knowledge of its nature and cure, almost gave me convulsions."

"He reported that you had fits called cats-an-nations. What did you tell him?"

"I told him I had a fit of cachinnation."

"But you must have seen colored people?"

"Certainly, a few, in civilized costumes, as valets or waiters, in dress coats and white neckties; but lo-quacious rainbows and resuscitated gods are a new experience."

"Is Mas'r Hartlums gettin' easier?" asked Harklis, coming towards us, and making his best bow.

"I'm quite well now," answered Roland, with commendable gravity.

“Dat’s good, *as fur as it goes*. Here’s t’other young Mas’r. We’s come to git yer fish, to cook ’em fur de dinner.”

“All right, Apollo, Diana has caught one fish. You may carry the fruits of the chase; and, Mercury, my boy,” turning to Victor, “you may bear her weapons.”

Hercules took the one fish with indomitable composure, and Victor the rod. “Where are the river-nymphs to unyoke the stags from her chariot?” he asked.

“I’m nymphs, and stags, and all the other things. Hasten Mercury, my lad, to assist Apollo in the preparation of the sylvan feast. Diana is hungry.”

“Indeed, I will not,” returned Victor, laughing; “you shall not enjoy this delicious spot without me.”

And then began a boyish frolic and play of words, which lasted till we were summoned to dinner. On our way there, the boys sprang over each others’ heads, waltzed around me, and did everything but walk; the result being that they reached the oak grove in a rather breathless condition. Juno’s dinner was excellent. Trout, chicken, salad, bread and butter, coffee; then wild strawberries and cream.

“Diana,” whispered Roland, “your entertainment is the best of all; may we come again some day?”

“Laws a massy, Mas’r Hartlums, jes come ’long any time. Harklis kin allers ketch dem trout,” re-

plied Juno, who had heard him ; “ an’ as ter chickens an’ salad, dey grows wild. Come along jes whenever yer want ter.”

“ Thank you most kindly, Juno. On the next moon, look out for us.”

“ Harklis !” shouted his spouse, “ mine *me*. Dey’s all comin’ on de nex’ moon.”

“ All rite, missis,” was the answer.

The wagon stood ready, as soon as dinner was over, a lovely drive finishing the day. No one was tired ; there had been no wearisome effort for enjoyment—only an acceptance of the good the gods provided.

The boys and mamma went to the grand Clapham ball, whilst I passed the evening with my uncle. He did not ask for music, but strove to draw from me some expression of feeling, some opinion about our lives, and the whys and wherefores of things. Then he gave me a glimpse of an inner life, that for harmony and beauty seemed unequaled. It made me wonder that I had been blind so long ; and the effect upon me was so peculiar that after he retired, and I waited for the return of the party-goers, I occupied my thoughts by testing the characters of my friends, by their effect upon me. One after another, I summoned them to judgment. One left my spirit in its old state—

“ bowed and bent,
In sad unrest and ill content ;”

another made life seem a fraud ; another produced desolation. Some were exhausting, and offered no restoratives. Victor was restful, and Roland—but I came to no decision there. I went back to him who smoothed all paths, putting aside life's problems in a perfect rest of faith, until the day of revelation. This one was my uncle.

* * * * *

For several days after this, it so chanced that I saw very little of my cousins. There was a perfect *furor* of entertainments, and with praiseworthy good-nature, mamma and the boys accepted every invitation. During the daytime Roland was invisible, and Victor unusually devoted to his father, who was planning improvements in the grounds. I was often consulted, and enjoyed being with them ; but a week passed before I had any conversation with Roland. At last he came, crashing through the branches, to my rocky seat.

“To-morrow ! to-morrow I will be free ! Do you hear, Milly ?” he exclaimed. “To-morrow I will show you my whole heart. Oh ! tell me—just one little word—have you no faith in me yet ?”

“I have great faith in you, Roland.”

“Is it true ? Milly, darling Milly, will you believe in me *before* I explain ? Oh, the joy of it !”

“Yes, yes ! I *will* ! I *must* !” I answered, regardless of consequences.

“My whole soul thanks you;” and he bowed his head upon my hand. “But I will wait; there shall not be a shadow between us. You shall see how true my every thought has been. Oh, *anima mia*, you will know, then, how hard it was! and yet, my very occupation has been a solace and a comfort. I cannot stay, if I would keep my resolution for this one more day. Farewell, till to-morrow! Then, I will never let you free again.” He stood a moment, looking heart-words upon me; then, with “*Schönen Dank, mein Liebchen,*” he left me.

I felt very calm and still. I seemed to be on the border of a great joy. Doubt of Roland had become impossible; deep, earnest love was a necessity. Mamma joined me then; she rarely followed me on my wanderings, but she said she was restless, and needed to hear my voice. I drew her beside me and told my story.

“I know very little about him, mamma. I love him; that is all, and to-morrow I will tell him so.”

Mamma’s voice was very soft and subdued. She told me my uncle had hoped for this, but had entreated her to say nothing; he wished me to be quite free from outside influence. “What can it be that he will explain to-morrow?” she added.

“It will not affect me now; I know Roland’s heart is all mine. I cannot talk about it, mamma. I wanted

you to know ; but wait till to-morrow before you tell my uncle."

My mother's kiss was very fervent then, but she did not stay with me. I had another quiet hour, and it came to me to be grateful that life had not withheld "love and duty" from me.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE, DEATH AND JOY.



THE morrow came. I watched the morning breaking in the East; and as the sun began its course, I said to myself: "*It is to-day.*"

It was bright and fair, rather more golden than usual, as the light poured its glory into my room. The sky, too, was singularly cloudless, but mamma made no remark upon it when we went outside after breakfast. I rather wondered that she did not.

We were to take luncheon at the Hall. It was too early to think of preparing—then I heard that masterful tread of Roland's. "I have come for you, Milly. I want you to put on your cardinal silk and lace overdress," he said. Somehow it hurt me to deny him, and yet I must—it was so preposterous. "I cannot wear such a costume in the morning," I answered; "and, moreover, the lace dress is a wreck."

"It has been restored, Milly, in New York, by some Madame Fabrique, and is in your room now—*please* oblige me."

I put it all on, just as when I first dressed to meet him, then covered my finery with a light shawl—"a very satisfactory compromise, my darling," he said.

We walked to the Hall together, and soon were summoned to luncheon, at which meal Victor elected to be in extraordinary spirits, entertaining us in his most charming style. Roland did not join with his usual *repartie*, but told Victor he was a terrible fellow in headaches.

“My dear boy, I had no idea you had an ache or pain.”

“I have not, but my proposition remains the same.”

“Slightly irrelevant,” returned his brother.

We rose, laughing, and went to the drawing-room, which was shaded and cool. After a few moments, Roland invited us to go up stairs and look at his work. “I have been occupied in preparing a gift for papa. Will it tempt you all to mount the stairs?” he asked. “Papa has not been up once since we came.”

“My dear boy, did you need me? Of course, we will all go now; come, my little girl.”

I thought of Ellen Ramsay, as Roland drew the curtain, and we looked across one room to the entrance of the other. A very rich gold-fringed curtain hung over the door. Roland placed me opposite to it; then gathered it in his hand and looped it on one side, and then—was it a mirror? For an instant I truly thought it was. I seemed to be standing in the doorway, one hand raised as if to remove the curtain, my long hair

hanging down, my dress, my lace, my chatelaine, all reproduced in a truly wonderful fashion. Like a lightning flash I understood the whole matter. Ellen had indistinctly seen the sketch of this figure. Roland, in thoughtless mischief, told her his wife was there, and then found it impossible to explain to me that he had dared to say this of my portrait. It was clear as day.

“Will you unfasten your hair, my child?” asked my uncle.

I took off the brown bow, and the golden veil fell around me. There was a burst of admiration, for Roland seemed to have dipped his brush in its coloring. They were all loud in praises, but it was to me an idealization of myself.

“The minute perfection of your work is beyond praise, my boy, and the likeness is the most wonderful thing I have ever seen. It is my little girl herself. Thank you a thousand times.”

He grasped Roland’s hand in his pleasure, and, to my surprise, Roland put both arms around his neck and kissed him!

“Your gift to *me* is beyond price,” he whispered. Then, turning to me, “Bring your lace nearer, Milly, and see how I have worked to copy it. I told you I was neither making nor mending. I had great difficulty in making the truth stand perpendicular, owing, *Justicia*, to a tendency which, in your blindness, you

evinced towards one-sided views." He had drawn me apart.

"I see all your dilemma," I whispered.

"And forgive me?" My look was all he could have, for the others came to us, and were examining the details of the portrait. It seemed like a trance, but I heard the words: "The pose is striking;" "See those flesh tints;" "It's Milly's arm exactly." We only stood and waited. Presently mamma and Victor disappeared; then my uncle took my hand, and asked: "What will my little girl give my boy for his devotion to her?"

"My only possession is myself," I answered.

"And that is no longer yours, *carissima*," said Roland, taking my hand in a very determined style.

"It is all right, I see, my children; you do not need the old man's help. May you have all the happiness, all the bliss, *with which you can be trusted*," were his strange words.

"Amen," said Roland.

Then Roland's arm was around me, and we went down-stairs together; the great joy had come to me in this quiet way.

It was very strange. Everything happened so that anything different was impossible. Mamma kissed me, and Victor kissed my hand; but I said nothing.

"No one wants us till dinner time; come, Milly,"

said the dear voice. The shawl was put around me, and he and I went out into the beautiful summer world. We took our happiness where we could look at it, he and I alone under the broad blue sky ; where we could talk of its beginning, of its growth into perfection, and tell each other what it was to us.

Oh bliss, oh joy, oh heart of love !

No wonder the birds ceased their songs to listen ; no wonder the river lay motionless, lest it should lose one note of the music I heard that day.

* * * * *

The next morning Roland came to breakfast. "It will avail nothing to tell me of times and seasons. I have waited a lifetime, and now you are *mine, mine !*"

"You may come whenever you like," said mamma. "I shall see but one when you are together."

"Best of mothers-in-law, I kiss your hand," returned Roland, with a profound bow.

The hours of lonely meditation, of vainly seeking to read the future, were over ; life had begun. Roland and I were never weary of our long confidences to each other. There was variety enough in driving, riding, walking, boating. We were absorbed in the present.

Roland's gift of the portrait was a daily joy to his father and to mamma. It was hung and re-hung, but

at last found rest in one of the apartments exclusively belonging to my uncle.

Just two weeks from the day on which it was shown to us, we were on the portico after dinner. Victor and mamma, devoted friends now, were talking together; I was standing beside my uncle, who was leaning back in his chair with a strange, weary expression; my hand was on his head; Roland leaned against a marble column, with his eyes on mine. I looked up to reply to some remark of his, and, as I did so, was conscious of a burning heat under my hand. The crimson tide had risen again; my uncle was unconscious.

His boys carried him to his room; for four days and nights we watched him. Friends crowded the Hall, with offers of help and expressions of sympathy. Our two physicians, and a third from the city, did all that skill could do, but told us it would not avail to save him.

On the evening of the fifth day, mamma, in utter exhaustion, left us, for a few hours' rest. Victor, Roland, and I were watching; there had been a slight change, and we had a ray of hope. Suddenly he opened his eyes and looked in perfect consciousness, upon us. "Roland—Ricardo—Mildred," he said, slowly. "My own dear children—all equally dear;" he rested a moment, then "Mildred, alone," were his next words. The boys silently left the room.

"My daughter, I hoped to be with you until you are Roland's wife. I hoped that every honor that could be heaped upon the occasion of your marriage might be yours. Will you forego this for me?"

"I will do anything for you, dear uncle."

"Will you marry my boy now?"

I could not answer at once. My uncle's earnest eyes were seeking my reply.

"It is too much, I see. Forgive me; I wanted to see my boy's happiness."

"No, no, dear uncle, it is not too much. I will do whatever you wish."

"Thank you, my daughter. I have short strength—short time. Boys!"

They were beside him instantly. "My daughter Mildred has consented to let me see her Roland's wife. Ric, will you summon Mr. Jones?"

"Tell me, Mildred, exactly your heart," said Roland. "Even my father's wish must yield to yours. To me, my darling, this would be deep, solemn joy." He placed his hands on my shoulders, and fastened his eyes on mine; whole floods of love were poured upon me. "Will you be my wife now, my precious one?"

"Roland—I will."

My uncle's eyes brightened as I spoke; a smile of satisfaction passed over his face; mamma entered, then Victor, with Mr. Jones. The good clergyman

had scarcely left the house since my uncle's illness. Victor found him in the library.

It was a solemn bridal, yet even the presence of death could not take from it its joy. "Now, will you say 'father'?" said my uncle, when we kneeled beside him "man and wife."

"My own dear father," I said.

His loving look was his only answer; the physician bade us leave him; Victor and mamma remained. We did not go far off; Mr. Jones and Mr. Chetwood were with us. The reception rooms were full of friends—waiting, waiting.

Presently we were called—the end had come. Our father looked at each one; I fancied his gaze rested longest on me; then he closed his eyes, and each one heard, as from another land: "Farewell."

* * * * *

I do not know what passed, nor what happened during several days. They told me I fainted, and was carried from the room; that I was ill and unconscious. I suppose I was, and yet I knew that Roland was beside me. One day I opened my eyes on his dear face.

"It was too much for you, my darling. Will you forgive me for adding my wish to my father's?"

"Forgive you, Roland, my Roland—forgive you for loving me? Yes, dear, I forgive you; I will keep you forgiven. Am I too late? Is he gone?"

"His body is with us still; we kept it for your

wakening. Are you able to hear what we have done?"

"Yes, my husband."

Both hands were gathered to him, and held fast to his heart; but he spoke quietly, so that I need have no agitation. "The directions for his funeral are simple. We are to do as we best like; he has but three wishes. The first, that the coffin be covered with white velvet, and mounted with silver; that on it should only be laid branches from the orange and lemon trees; and that nothing black should be worn or used in any form in connection with his funeral. We have obeyed him perfectly; our own four white horses will draw the hearse. We sent to the city for a white one; it came to-day. Papa had no thoughts of gloom in connection with his death."

"It was beautiful in him to leave such directions; they may have been partly in consideration for us," I said.

"Oh, Milly, we have had him such a little while! we were so happy! It was such a daily delight to see how he enjoyed our being at home! Your mother—my mother—has been an angel to us. How she has borne all the fatigue I cannot imagine. There are so many to see and talk to! she has spared us so much! Will you be able to come down to-day, my own sweet wife?"

"Yes, Roland, I was only tired;" but it was with

very faltering steps I reached the dining room that day ; and on the morrow the white velvet coffin, with its heaped-up branches of orange and lemon, was carried away.

All the country around came to pay their tribute of respect to the one whose deeds of kindness were far more wide-spread than we had ever dreamed.

Then came the desolation.

Our footsteps echoed in the halls. We hushed our voices to whispers, and yet they seemed too loud. Hilda, the dove, fluttered in and out of the rooms, vainly seeking the one who so often fed and caressed her. And King—noble old dog ! lay beside *his* door for days, sometimes crying so pitifully that our hearts ached anew.

The day after the funeral we were gathered in the library ; Mr. Chetwood joined us. "To-morrow," he said, "we will open the will. There are two documents to be read first—one, addressed to Riccardo, the other, to Roland and Mildred. They are to be read in private, just before the will is opened. Please read them to-morrow, before twelve o'clock. At that hour we will meet here, and attend to business matters."

Mr. Chetwood was a kind friend, and spoke with deep feeling. We agreed to meet at twelve o'clock. The next morning we received our packages. Victor took his to his room. Roland and I read ours together.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROMANCE OF THE ROMAN SISTERS.



O MY DEAR CHILDREN :—

The following story I do not wish known to my son, Victor Riccardo Hartley. It is only for Roland Victor Hartley and my niece, Mildred Hartley.

That many years of my life were passed in Italy, you know ; that I was twice married there, may be news to you. I had letters to an Italian nobleman, and was made a welcome guest at his house. He had two daughters—twins—Nina and Anita. They were so much alike that, unless they were together, it was almost impossible to distinguish between them. They always dressed alike, and delighted in the constant bewilderment in which their friends were thrown. Although often addressing them by the wrong names, I loved only Nina. One evening, I went to learn my fate. Nina met me in the court, and we walked together in the garden, instead of going up-stairs. She said her sister was not well. Congratulating myself on seeing my darling alone, I soon told her my story, and heard that her sweet love was mine. The next morning I was early there. The two sisters were together. I took Nina's hand, and asked Anita for her

congratulations. Nina withdrew her hand, and rushed into the house. Anita looked at me with an arch smile :

“ You are mistaken again. It was I you saw last night. It is I to whom you have given your love.”

I was stupefied ; and to this day I do not know whether Anita knew my blunder. She looked at me in amazement.

“ Am *I* mistaken ?” she asked. “ Do you not love *me* ? Were the vows I heard false ? For, *oh* ! I have given you all my heart.”

Oh, was I weak ? What could I do ? My arms had been around the form that was before me ; my lips had been pressed to her lips. I had vowed eternal love ; I had accepted a vow in return, that seemed to me like an angel song.

“ My darling, forgive me ; I am forever blundering. Do you wonder I am embarrassed at what I have just done ?” And crushing thought, I strove, by every endearment, to repair my momentary hesitation.

I *cannot* recall the particulars of those days. Nina was very calm and still. Anita was joyous. The sisters were seldom together now. I lived in a sort of dream, trying to persuade myself that if my heart did not at the time correct the mistake of that fatal evening, its story was untrue ; it could not be that I loved Nina.

Anita always refused to refer to it, and I tried to

forget that I had called her Nina during the whole of the interview. Sometimes I determined to break the bond, and to try to learn whether the other sister returned my love. But how could I? What could I say to my kind friend, their father? Could I expect Nina to hear me now?

I absented myself while the preparations for the marriage were being made, hoping something would interfere; longing for I knew not what. I heard that Nina had been sent to Naples to her aunt; that she was not well.

My engagement to her sister was sufficient excuse for me to see her on my return to Rome, from Sorrento, whither I had gone.

She was pale, but did not refuse to walk with me in the beautiful grounds which bordered on the bay.

I ventured to approach the subject, for I was nearly insane. I suspected I had been quite so, when she turned her glorious eyes on me. "You have committed one error; make not your regret eternal, by falling into another." Then she spoke of other things, her tremulous tones only showing how deeply she was moved. Presently she referred to her sister, told me of a letter just received, in which she heard that I was daily expected. She promised to return in time for the wedding; then, by skillfully questioning me in regard to my plans, she reminded me of all that I had neglected, for I had given little heed to conven-

tionalities ; even the usual gift of a ring had never occurred to me. Oppressed by a sense of failure, and determined to do my duty—sturdily—(was the idea that came to me ; *faithfully*, I could not)—I hastened to Rome, and in a few days was beside my betrothed. We were married.

No mortal man could have received more devotion than I. My wife hung on every word. Truly, I tried to return it, ever reproaching my heart for its coldness. Whether Anita was satisfied I know not. She seemed content ; but I noticed that she never wished Nina to be with us ; in fact, she was happier when we were quite alone. Before a year had passed, our son was born. Then it was, a strange look passed over her face as she exclaimed, while I hung over her, happy for a moment : “ We will call him Victor—for I have conquered.”

Before I had time to analyze these words, she was delirious. Her father and Nina were sent for, and in a few days my fair young wife was dead.

Nina said to me, after the funeral : “ The child has not been baptized. Shall he have your name ? ”

“ It was Anita’s wish,” I replied ; “ but add another name to it. I dislike the name Victor.”

“ Shall I give him my father’s name ? ”

“ Yes, if you like ; but do not ask me to be present at his baptism. I must leave these scenes at once.”

She looked surprised at me, but I could not tell her

that her care of my child, her ministrations in my home, were crazing me ; for I knew, then, my heart was not with the wife in her grave.

My children, I am giving you a simple detail of facts. Judge me kindly.

Nina was silent a moment, then said : "Father and I must return home in a few days. If you wish to go now, we will close the house for you ; and, if we may, would like to take the little boy with us."

I acceded gladly. To go and to forget was my longing desire. The child I had only seen a few times ; I would have been obliged to intrust him to nurses, if I had kept him with me. It was right and natural that Nina should care for him.

I left them, with full freedom to do as they liked with the small villa at Tivoli, in which Anita and I had lived—to keep it or to sell it ; I cared not.

I am not writing a novel, and need only tell you facts. I went to the East. I traveled in Palestine, in India, and, on my return, in Egypt. Nina wrote each month, and filled her letters with stories of my boy, whom she had named Riccardo, after her father, and whom she called "Ric." When he was a year old, there came a formal proposition from his grandfather, asking if he might adopt him. His only son died many years before. This child of his daughter had twined himself around his heart. Could he have him for his own ? I consented, and wrote my renunciation of all

claim, present and future, to my son. Nina expressed great pleasure, and from that day spoke of him as her "little brother Ric."

My own life was a burden to me. I felt myself more than ever a failure; but I dared not see Nina again until I could ask for her love. I struggled with time—it had leaden wings. Would two years never pass? At last—at last, I walked once more in the streets of Rome. I had not told them of my coming. It was a glorious night. As I stood beside the great gateway, I heard the splash of the fountain in the court. I stopped to listen, and a faint song seemed borne upon the air. I rang the bell; the song ceased at the sound. The gate opened, as gates and doors do there, with no apparent hand. It struck me strangely that night; I felt as if the singer by the fountain and I were the only beings left in the world. I entered; the gate closed behind me; through the archway I saw the one I loved, seated on the edge of the marble basin of the fountain. She was looking toward me; the moon shone full in my face.

One cry of welcome I heard, and my darling was folded in my arms. There was no mistake then; there were few words spoken; heart to heart! I drew her in the shade of the marble loggia, and then I heard, and she heard, those words that made life a rapture.

Our father came to us: "I have suspected your

secret, my children ; you have done well ; now, may life be all joy for you."

"Done well!" My heart had been filled with remorse—but life was too full, then, of bliss, for a possible sorrow.

Our wedding took place as soon as some troublesome church preliminaries could be complied with. Only the relatives were present.

My small villa had been sold; a finely-appointed one at Bellagio was offered me; the retinue of servants were there ; nothing remained to do, but to take possession. Would that I could describe our life to you. No care, no anxiety ; surrounded by luxury ; a climate that makes each day a holiday; customs that make each day a *fête*. My wife, more gloriously beautiful than ever before, always well, always radiant. It would be hard to make you understand, in this restless country, how we lived.

The early morning was beautiful to us. Our breakfast of white rolls and fruits was served on the terrace overlooking the lake. Our letters and papers came to us there. We lingered over them until the sun had drunk the dewdrops from the foliage, so that we could enjoy our ride. Two white horses, active, spirited, but gentle as kittens, were waiting always before we were ready. Nina was superb on horseback ; in truth, I know not in which position she was most lovely. The rides were perfect, but I will not describe them,

for I am making my story too long. On our return, my darling sought her cool and curtained rooms, and, with an effort that even now seems herculean, I left her, for the mid-day hours, to quiet repose. Sometimes I had to look in upon her—the darkened room, with its one light—my darling, in her white robes, asleep!

If she saw me, she gave no sign, for she had a strange idea that our love would live longer if it had some hours of rest each day. *Rest!* My only rest was by her side.

As the day died, and the cool shadows lengthened, Nina reappeared. I would hear her moving in her room, and then place myself where I could see her the moment she opened the heavy curtain which hung over the doorway. The curtain was of blue velvet, with silver fringe—an odd idea of Nina's had hung tinkling bells among its silver tassels. How I watched for their sounding! A white hand, a faint ringing, a jeweled arm, and the curtain raised with a jubilate of the joyous music, and my princess stood before me! I always waited a moment, lest I should lose one line of beauty, and then I greeted her as if we had been separated for months.

She laughed merrily over our daily drama. "I come as quietly as I can, dear," she said.

"Ah, but, *carissima*, you had the bells hung there," I rejoined; "as if my heart's pean were not enough."

Then was our dinner-hour. Do not imagine a heavy English dinner ; one does not need such food under Italian skies. It was always a feast to me. Our iced coffee and fruits and cigarettes were served outside—generally in a pavilion, close to the lake. The little pavilion I have built here is an exact reproduction of it—save that in Italy it was lighted by a silver lamp, when the outside lights were only golden stars. Our evenings were passed on the lake, or sometimes in driving, unless friends sought us ; and then our pavilion was like a little court, crowded with those who would do homage to my princess.

My pen lingers on this theme. How shall I dip it in the black darkness that followed !

One long summer, one winter at Sorrento—once more at our home. The cry of a little child, the lighting of the mother's eye, as she whispered, "His name must be Victor, for I have conquered !" and then the lips turned cold to which I clung, and my cry of "*darling ! darling ! DARLING !*" had no response.

My children, more than twenty years have passed, and that hour has had no ending. Both sisters died with the same words on their lips. Nina had never known that Anita spoke them. Both my children were named Victor : one, Victor Riccardo ; the other I named Rolando Victor.

I took the nurse and child to my father. We wept together. I seemed the older of the two. We

reveled in our anguish ; we talked of nothing but Nina.

I revealed to him my first sorrow, which he had guessed ; we did not seek comfort ; we only mourned.

At last he said : " My son, this will kill us both. Go, seek change ; leave me these precious children. When I die, you can claim them ; but the elder boy is mine ; he can never be your son."

At that time, I heard of the troubles of my brother, and that a little girl had been born to him. I was thankful for a duty. I came home, and was in time to assure my brother that the loss of his property should never be felt by those he loved. He died in peace, and I have striven to fulfill my trust.

I opened the old homestead. I filled it with luxury. I tried to induce my brother's wife and child to live with me. As this was refused, I have endeavored by other means to make them happy. I went several times abroad to see my father and my children ; they were too necessary to each other to think of separation ; I only stipulated that the boys should be educated Protestants. They had the best of care, the most thorough of tuition, and were never apart. Very loving and lovely were these little boys, children of twin sisters. When my father died, leaving his whole estate to " his child, Victor Riccardo," I went out again, to make arrangements for the children. I was too well satisfied with their progress to bring them to

this country, but added certain English teachers to their instructors, with one of whom I was in regular correspondence. When they were old enough to choose, they wished to go to Heidelberg to finish their studies. Their English tutor accompanied them, and his supervision was constant.

I wished the boys to be neither Italians nor Germans, but to know America as their home. They were reported to be all that I could wish. I remained here and grew old, welcoming each year as a boon, that shortened my separation from Nina. I can hardly realize that I have lived but fifty years. My hair is gray, my step is feeble, and my hand shakes with the weariness of this long writing.

You know the rest; my eldest boy is now my adopted son, according to my promise to his grandfather. From the time Roland was nineteen, I placed at his disposal an income equal to that which Victor inherited from his grandfather at twenty-one. The remainder of my property you will find divided impartially—my three children alike. I am writing after my boy has received a promise from Mildred Hartley that she will be his wife. I have long loved my boys with the same love, and have given my little girl an equal share. To "Ric" I have sent an account of my marriage to the two sisters, and of his grandfather's adoption of him.

I do not wish him ever to know that I loved the

mother of one son more than the other. His childhood has been unblighted ; his manhood shall have no sorrow that I can spare him.

My children, I cannot wish for you the wild ecstasy of my marriage with Nina. It was delirium. But such joy as you may have in a wedded life of peace and rest—such joy as may be continued for many years—I pray may be yours.

VICTOR HARTLEY.

Our eyes were blinded with tears as we read the romance of this life, and my heart filled with remorse that to this heart-broken man I had ever refused my sympathy. How often he had looked wistfully after me as I went out alone, when he had proposed that I should sing or read beside him, his loving voice saying, "No matter, my dear, another day will do as well ; if you are happy, it is enough." Why did I not turn and throw my arms around his neck, gladly consenting to his slightest wish ? I said this to Roland, who never would believe that I had failed in any way in loving duty to my uncle.

"You are mistaken, Mildred," he said. "My father always told me of the exceeding comfort you were to him, and how dearly he loved you."

"Roland, Roland, I tell you I was cold and indifferent. How could I know the heart-ache that his calmness covered ? He has ever been loving to me,

but I must have seemed indifferent, for never once, even as a child, do I remember his having kissed me."

"It was not that he did not love you, my own precious one. My father's last kiss was given to my mother, and belongs to that *unended hour* of which he told us. I have heard that much, for he never kissed us, his children; and our old nurse told us he had once said, as I sat on his knee, 'I love you, my boy, but I have no kisses for you. Never again can I form my lips to that endearment—never, never;' and then he bowed his head upon my curls, and wept as only strong men weep."

"Roland, will you forgive me that I have taken all, and given so little to those who have loved me. I fancied I was combating the untruth around me, while I was only indulging my own heart of pride. I know, now, that a heart's sorrow and a heart's truth may rest under a breastplate of conventionality. I know, now, there can be two lives in one."

"We will repent together," he said; "and now, shall we confer with Victor? The secret we have to keep is simple. He is in possession of the facts, as well as we; to us are intrusted the feelings."

We found Victor in deep thought over his manuscript. Roland went to him, and, in their foreign way, they fell into each other's arms, each with the same words—

"My brother!"

“And I am the eldest son, and yet not the son,” said Victor. “It is strange my father gave me up.”

“He went away—in his sorrow,” I hastily put in, “before his heart had known a father’s love; and while he was absent, the proposal was made.”

“Yes, dear sister, I know; and yet it is strange to me, even yet; for I am my own father’s adopted son.”

“We will know no difference, my brother,” said I. “We are all his children; he loved us all alike. I know it now. Forgive me, Victor, that I was blind so long.”

“You were the light and joy of his heart, Mildred. Why do you reproach yourself?”

I shook my head. How little they knew my remorse.

“Mr. Chetwood,” said Prescott’s voice. My mother came in soon after, the servants were called, and the will was read.

It was very simple. The facts in regard to the marriages were stated, Victor’s double adoption explained, and then the property was simply divided. To my mother, a life rent—sufficient for every want. To Roland, first property equal to the estate which Victor had received from his grandfather, the income of which he had received for several years. To me—Mildred Hartley—an equal sum; to Mr. Jones, a yearly income, to be paid from the estate; to Mr. Chetwood, a gift in money. Prescott, and each other servant,

including Juno, were remembered ; certain local charities provided for ; the English tutor and the Italian nurse received their portion ; then the remainder divided equally between Roland, Riccardo, and Mildred. The old homestead, now so luxuriously appointed, and the villa at Bellagio, to be owned jointly for five years ; then, if we wished, both estates might be sold and divided.

There were particular descriptions of property, in wearisome legal phrases, but the divisions were simple and satisfactory.

We talked it over with Mr. Chetwood, in family conclave. "The boys" had no secrets from mamma and me. Our interests were the same, and our hearts had all centered in one love.

CHAPTER X.

I PROPOSE TO BE A PRINCESS.



THE removal from our cottage to the Hall was readily accomplished. We could not leave our happy home without some regret, though the change of residence was indispensable. It seemed strange to see no outward sign of mourning, but there certainly was less of gloom than if we had made ourselves perambulating towers of crape and bombazine. Drives and excursions were resumed, as well as our evenings of music. Roland and I passed many hours on our rocks, or in other secluded spots of the "Wilderness." He never left me, except when Mr. Chetwood insisted on claiming his "undivided attention;" this, he said, it was impossible to give, if I were in sight. One day, as we were walking together, King, as usual, bounding before us, Roland took a letter from his pocket. "*Cara mia*," said he, "I have a letter from a German girl, little Gretchen; will you read it?"

"I must trust you to reveal its secrets; for, though I can read German print, I can make but little of the written words; the letters all look as if something were left out in their formation."

“*Grazzie, anima mia*, I will first tell about the writer. You know of our home in Heidelberg, but I have not described its inmates. Victor and I, with our tutor, lived there for many happy years. There were no other lodgers, and we occupied the entire second floor. The house was finely situated, half-way up the hill of All Saints, which rises abruptly from the Neckar, which the house fronts. Our rooms were large and comfortable, opening on a balcony. The landlady, the Frau Bodenhausen, a nice, motherly woman—a widow—was devoted to us, caring even tenderly for us motherless boys. The old grandmother, who never left her chair, except to be lifted on her bed at night, had always kindly words when we stopped to speak with her, and say ‘guten Morgen.’ Then little Gretchen—she was a child when we went there ; she is fifteen now, and quite a belle among her companions ; she, too, did her part in caring for us. Fräulein Gretchen—I always picture her in a stuff dress, immense apron, woolen stockings and heavy shoes. She dresses finely sometimes, but nothing suits her as well as her every-day costume. From this interesting young person I have received a letter, which I promise to translate faithfully.”

“HOCHGEEHRTESTER HERR UND WERTHER FREUND :

“Die herrlichen Sommertage sind beinahe vorüber. Vergebens haben wir Ihre Zurückkunft erwartet. Die

alte Grossmutter sitzt geduldig in der Pforte, und fragt wenn die jungen Herren wieder kommen, und Ihr 'guten Morgen,' wünschen. Die Mutter hatte während der Traubenernte, die schönsten und besten Trauben auf die Seite gelegt, täglich hoffend dass Sie und Ihr Bruder ankommen würden. Die Grossmutter ist der Nachfrage müde, und die Trauben auf dem Tische sind verwelkt. Hat die werthe Dame von der Sie so viele Bilder besitzen abgeschlagen Sie zu bekleiden? Wir lebten in der Hoffnung sie festlich zu empfangen und würden wenn sie kommen will die Zimmer mit Blumen und Garlanden behängen und die Laube mit Fröhlichkeit und Wohlgerüche bedecken. Unsere groben Sitten werden wir unbemerkbar machen und der Fremden, milde entgegenkommen.

"Wollen Sie Ihr sagen dass unsere Herzen auf sie warten.

"Ihre ergebenste Dienerin,

"*Heidelberg.*"

"GRETCHEN.

"Could you understand it, *mein Liebchen*? Little Gretchen expresses herself nicely for one who writes so seldom."

"No, Roland, not entirely. Read it in English for me. I lost half of it."

"MOST HONORED SIR AND WORTHY FRIEND :

"The beautiful summer days are nearly over. We

have looked in vain for your return. The old grandmother sits patiently in the doorway, and asks when the young gentlemen will come back and say 'good morning' to her? The mother, in the time of grape-gathering, put aside the finest of the clusters, hoping each day that you and your brother would come. The grandmother is weary of her asking; the grapes have wilted on the dish! Has the fair lady, of whose pictures you had so many, refused to come with you? We were hoping to have a *fête* for her. We will deck the rooms with vines and flowers; we will cover the arbor with gladness and sweet perfume, if she will come. We will smoothe our rough ways, and be gentle to the stranger. Will you tell her our hearts are awaiting her?

"Your obedient servant,

"GRETCHEN."

"What a lovely letter! Your Gretchen is a darling little treasure. What a poetical idea!—'Cover the arbor with gladness.' Roland! you invented that. Oh, those hieroglyphics!"

"Patience, you unbeliever; you can read these words: '*mit Frölichkeit.*' I know no better word than 'gladness' to give her idea. I assure you, The-
mei, I have tried to read it literally; are you not satisfied, *mein Liebchen?*"

"Yes, you dear boy; truth blazes in your eyes.

Tell the child I love her, and would like nothing better than to be there this very moment."

"My darling! really? truly?"

"Yes, Roland. Why?"

"Because, because, my own bright, beautiful treasure, we can be there in less than two weeks. This is the tenth; a Bremen steamer sails day after to-morrow; we can have a few weeks there before the cold weather."

"You take my breath away. Stop. Have I really said I will go?"

"You will never say anything to me that you may not recall. But, oh, my darling, let us pass the last beautiful autumn days with the Frau Bodenhausen; let me show you the old castle; come with me up the hill to the convent; come with me to the lovely haunts around dear old Heidelberg. You shall have a trout supper at the Wolf's Brunnen, and a picnic at Neck-argemünd. You shall see the last of the vintage, and I will rescue a part of your 'honeymoon' from sadness."

"Dear Roland," and I could not keep the tears from my voice, as I felt his great love; "I will go today if you wish. But we are not sad. Our dear father has so left his spirit of happiness among us, that I cannot call his memory sad—"

"No; not a sadness of despair. There is even a comfort in the association of his presence with every

room ; yet, I feel sometimes overwhelmed with the loss, just as I had wound my heart around him. Let us change the scene for awhile. These days can come but once to us. We will come back again ; but now let us go where the echo of our footsteps will not tell us that the halls are lonely from his absence. We will not love him less, but we will be less reminded of our loss. Day after to-morrow, *Amore mio ?*”

“ Yes, Roland ; and be thankful that I never was trammelled by conventionalities. I was married without a trousseau ; and, unless I begin at once, I shall go to Europe without any luggage.”

We laughed merrily over this, and then I exclaimed :

“ What of mamma and Victor ?”

“ We will leave them for awhile ; if they like, they can follow us later. The old palazzo in Rome is unoccupied, save by the Padrone ; perhaps Victor will have it made habitable for us all to pass the winter in.”

“ How perfectly enchanting ! First to Gretchen— ‘ *mit Fröhlichkeit* ’—then, when the cold days come, to Italia’s sunny skies—”

“ If all the same to you, *cara mia*, I would prefer Italia’s sunny land.”

“ Nonsense, Roland ! but tell me how I can see the vintage, when Gretchen says it is over.”

“ My child, the accuracy of your mental perceptions has always been a trial to me. The Boden-

hausens do not raise grapes for the making of wine. They raise only enough for their own consumption, and to sell to the hotels and strangers ; therefore, they gather when the grapes are in perfection for eating. The vintage is later—sometimes the very end of October, or the first of November, the grapes being left on the vines until they begin to show symptoms of decay. We will be there in time, that is, if I telegraph at once for our state-room in the Bremen steamer.”

“I suppose I can buy something in Heidelberg, if necessary?”

“Yes, I presume so. Gretchen has clothes, of some sort ; they are rather a contrast to your dainty fabrics. But do you really need anything additional ? Will you be inconvenienced by this haste ?”

“No, Roland, no ; I was only jesting. I have all that I need ; and the same Madame Alphonse who sends me my ‘dainty fabrics’ from Paris, can supply me wherever I am. I must say good-by to Juno, and some friends here ; tell Black Beauty why I leave him—that is all.”

We sauntered home. Life was easy to us in those days.

Our plans were soon revealed to mamma and Victor, and we were pleased to find that they highly approved of them.

“There will be a thousand things to do,” said mamma, as we went in to luncheon.

“We are not going to do them,” returned Roland. “Milly and I are going with hand-bags ; we will sail day after to-morrow.”

At this point, Prescott dropped a plate ! Of course, we ignored the crash, but I felt a thrill of delight, and could not deny myself the pleasure of telling Roland, in German, that now my happiness was complete—a misfortune had befallen the prince of butlers—he had betrayed an emotion ! To which silly speech he replied, in the same language, that all the great Bible characters each failed in one point ; a weakness like mine was, therefore, pardonable in heathen goddesses, such as Diana, Themis and Justicia.

I did not then know that poor Prescott had neither eaten nor slept during my uncle’s illness. When I learned this, I could have asked his pardon ; but it was ever thus ; my own unjustness, my prejudiced judgments, were constantly rising before me. There was no need to tell him of my foolish enmity, and in the many after years of his faithful service, I made full reparation.

Our plans were fully discussed. We proposed to be in Rome before Christmas, and persuaded mamma and Victor to promise to join us there in time for the festivities.

“This gives an air of solidity to the whole affair,” said Roland. “I feel now that we are going, and will telegraph at once for state-rooms.”

The horse was waiting. He leaped gayly upon him, and rode off.

"My old home shall be in readiness for you," said Victor, as he returned to us after Roland had gone. "You shall be its mistress, Milly, and we your guests. I will make only sufficient changes to render it habitable. You will like to see where papa's little boys played, and how they lived."

"Do not make any changes in it, Victor. I want to know, as nearly as possible, what it was twenty years ago. There is a romance to American ears in the name Roman palace. I will feel like a princess."

"An old Roman palace, in these modern days of luxury, is but a succession of bare and dreary rooms, dark pictures, cold statuary, gilded furniture, and faded hangings; nothing homelike or cheerful. I fear, my princess, if your surroundings are to be your only claim to the title, you will hardly find enough grandeur for self-deception."

"Do not disenchant me. I am sure of a great stone gateway, a court, a fountain, *loggie*, a garden, with—I hope—a flight of marble steps, a rail somewhere, with those delightful balusters, shaped like decanters, and great urns, with—what is that spiky plant that grows in them—at least, in pictures?"

"Yucca, I suppose you mean."

"Yes, yucca; then, old blackened statues, with broken noses—I know exactly."

“Yes, all that you can have,” he said, laughing at my palatial ideas; “and the steps down into the garden are blackened and broken, too. I know them well; I have rolled down, and tumbled up, often enough to have had fac-similes of sharp stone corners all over me. The ‘yellow Tiber’—which translate ‘muddy’—flows at the foot of the garden, too—”

“I see it now! and oh, Victor! I hope a great avenue of box, dark, gloomy, and dreary! Does it lead anywhere?”

“Yes, to an artificial cave, where a petrified hermit, with a beard as long as that of Michael Angelo’s Moses, presides over a trickling fountain. Roland was so afraid of him that he screamed with fear, when I tried to take him in the avenue.”

“It is perfectly enchanting! I can hardly wait till Christmas. Will it be cold?”

“Some of our winter days are cold and dreary; but they are exceptions. There are very few when it is not pleasanter outside than indoors. The sun warms the outer air. Sometimes, even when it is oppressive, we need fires inside of the house.”

“Promise not to modernize it.”

“I will not give an order about the garden; you can do that yourself. But, for my own honor, let me have some of the rooms carpeted or rugged, and made a little more creditable, before the arrival of the princess.”

“My daughter, I would advise you not to prevent some changes in even a palace that has been unoccupied for more than ten years. Moth and rust are practical enemies,” remarked mamma, calmly annihilating my romantic nonsense.

“I give up to Father Time’s ravages,” I replied, dancing off into the hall, while my delight further expressed itself in a brilliant roulade.

“Pirouette up-stairs, Milly,” said mamma, “and give your orders about your packing ; everybody will be here to-morrow, and there will not be a moment for thought.” I followed her advice ; and none too soon, for the afternoon was hardly long enough for the needful preparations ; and by dinner-time, according to the remarkable celerity with which news travels around “circles,” “everybody” began to come. Mr. Chetwood “concluded to come in to dine, there being certain business affairs still unsettled.” Mr. Jones thought he “had better come before the crowd.”

Roland’s friends returned with him, giving Prescott the delight of something like a dinner party again. It was hardly over before the rush began. Friends and enemies came in wild confusion ; they had all heard it nearly as soon as we knew it ourselves. Our skill in partition of guests was useless, the Claphams and Trents stood side by side ; the Barbers and the Barber’s poles met face to face ; the lovely, delicate Mrs. Jones sat on the sofa with the vigorous

maiden, who, in an affected, die-away voice, so often announced : " Oh, dear Mr. Jones ; I fairly adore him ; how he bears his trials ; dear, blessed man." Mamma glanced at me in mute despair. Our years of careful avoidance of such *contretemps* were of no avail before so many collisions and collusions.

" There is some comfort in the survival of the fittest," whispered Roland. Fortunately, the one topic of our sudden voyage was a point of mutual interest and of safe conversation.

" But, Mr. Hartley, you are leaving before seeing anything of our country," said Mrs. Trent to my husband.

" It is with great regret, my dear madam, that I do so. Our plan was to travel here during this autumn, and not to go abroad until next year ; but to-day we decided to go at once, and reserve our American researches till another year."

" And not see Niagara ?" exclaimed Mrs. Clapham.

" Or Catskill ?" said Mrs. Trent.

" Don't make it harder to bear," laughed Roland. " My life is passed in a perpetual balancing. If Europe goes up, Niagara comes down."

" It would be hard to make Niagara go up," simpered Mr. Jones' admirer.

" Good ! capital !" exclaimed an old bachelor, who never troubled himself with original remarks, but made himself agreeable by applauding those of others.

Before I heard more—for I had a trick of listening for Roland's voice, even while talking—Ellen Ramsay and her shadow came in. They were profuse in kind words, and Ellen whispered: "Oh, Milly, if I could only see you alone! I have so much to say!" at which Mr. Dedham, who had half heard, said: "I am in no haste, Ellen; say what you wish to Mrs. Hartley."

I was so vexed with the tone in which he spoke, that, although I had no wish for Ellen's confidences, I replied: "Come with me a moment to my room, Ellen. You have never seen it since I have received my statuettes;" and, before her lover recovered, I carried her away. She dared not look behind her, but, after we reached the door of the drawing-room, fairly ran, till she reached mine.

"Shut the door and lock it, Milly. Oh, you blessed girl! I shall die if that man keeps following me around as he does now. Sometimes I think I am getting softening of the brain;" and she threw herself into a chair, with a deep groan.

"Ellen," said I, sitting on a low cushion beside her, "let me entreat you to break the bond now. Do not, pray do not try to live with a man whom, I fear, you even dislike!"

"I'll do well enough when we are married, Milly, if I can only live through the engagement; he won't care to be so much with me, then. No matter for me;

let me see your beautiful things. I can only stay a few moments."

Hastily she looked at statuettes, pictures, and all the various articles with which Roland's love had been daily ornamenting my rooms; then suddenly seized both of my hands, and looked wildly into my eyes.

"Milly, is Victor engaged?"

"I do not know. He has told me a good deal about a young girl whom he knows in Heidelberg, but has never intimated more than friendship."

"That is enough. Henry wishes to be married in October. I shall consent, for I cannot endure this life."

And then the pit on the brink of which she stood looked deep and dark to me. I must speak.

"Oh, Ellen!" I exclaimed, "once more, listen to me. Do not begin your married life with a lie. You need not shrink from the word—what is not a truth is a lie. Would you build a house on an insecure foundation? Would you fasten a rabid dog with a broken chain? Would you drive over a tottering bridge? And how much better to do any and all of these than to perjure yourself with a false vow. I may never see you again, Ellen; let my last words entreat you to be true."

"You exaggerate the position," she replied. "I have a sort of interest in Henry, and if he ever knows that I was not in love with him, he will forgive me. Such faults are slight to a lover."

“Whether slight or not to him, it is a matter on which your happiness will depend. What he will forgive, or will not forgive, I cannot tell; but for your own sake be true. After all, you are most with *yourself*. Your communings are with your *own* soul. Do not force yourself to admit into the inner sanctuary a blackened soul. Be true to yourself, be true to God. Do not judge a lie from its consequences, but judge it from its *parentage*. The devil is the father of lies. From God comes light and truth. Think, Ellen, ‘in Him is no *variableness*, neither shadow of turning.’ Oh, to be true as He is! To have the line of our life run parallel to His life—”

“Milly, for Heaven’s sake, what is the matter with you? Where have you learned all this? You always did make a fuss about truth, but, gracious! you are a bench of bishops and all the clergy put together. It is worse than when you refused to cover your doll’s dress to hide a stain. Do you remember saying, ‘Why, Ellie, the stain will be there just the same if I do put a bow over it’? I cannot explain to Henry now; it is quite impossible. If I have told an untruth, I must bear the suffering.”

“Why, Ellen? Why must you? Think what it will be. The daily, hourly lie. And yet, I wish you would give it up from a higher motive. The fear of penalty seems such a low reason. Can you not love truth because it *is* truth?”

“No, Milly—I cannot. I only half understand you. You always had a way of doing things that puzzled me, and now, if you are going to add religion to all your other mysteries, we will live in different worlds. When did you learn all this?”

I hesitated to tell Ellen of the hours that Roland and I passed over the Word of God—both feeling ignorant, although he knew far more than I; yet both striving to come nearer the Divine Life of which we read. I did not answer.

“Milly, does Roland teach you?”

“Yes,” I answered. Then Ellen burst into tears. “Oh, Victor! Victor! have I lost such a life? Come, Milly; I am a fool; you have talked me into idiocy—Oh, who is that?”

Prescott knocked gently.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Mr. Dedham presents his compliments, and wishes to know whether Miss Ramsay is here?”

I opened the door. “Say we will return to the drawing-room in a few moments.”

“Now, Ellen, we must go. Is there no hope?”

“For *me*? None.” But she threw her arms around my neck, and kissed me, and thanked me for what she called my faithfulness. “Faithfulness! Mine! Oh, my poor heart, and its reproaches for my wasted life. What was I that I dared to reprove others?”

Mr. Dedham was waiting in the hall. His querulous voice said: "You have been absent from me a long time." I listened anxiously for the answer, and fairly shivered as I heard:

"Oh, Henry, dear, I could not possibly come before. Mildred's room is full of the loveliest things imaginable." Her face, neck and arms were dyed with the crimson stain of falsehood, and it grew deeper as her lover replied:

"Each one of them I will duplicate for my bride."

I turned away heartsick. The crowd were preparing to leave, and, amid kind wishes and kind words, once more her arms were around me. "Good-by, dear, faithful Milly!" were the last words I ever heard from Ellen Ramsay. When next we met I was coolly greeted by a weary, sad-eyed Mrs. Dedham.

What passed between us I did not tell Roland; he never liked Ellen, and I had no right to reveal her interest in Victor. My own great happiness made my heart tender to the one who had failed, and who was going out into life's battle trusting on a reed.

Yet, as I tried to find excuse, the false note in her voice rang out in its hideousness, and the contrast with him who "sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not," separated us as if an iron door were closed upon her. In my life she could have no part; from childhood I had shrunk from one who loved and made a lie,

CHAPTER XL

MOUNT OLYMPUS IN SHADOW.



Y first thought on this last day was my faithful Juno ; no news of our going could reach her, for our charmed circle did not include Olympus, and no explanation would ever convince her that "Mis Meely" could have too much to do to bid her "good-by." I consulted Roland about it, and, with deepest regrets, he said it would be impossible to go.

"I have a thousand things to do, Milly, which that wretched old Chetwood insists upon. Lawyers ought to take trouble from one ; he piles it upon me. I really cannot accomplish Juno's high home too."

"I'm sorry, dear," I replied ; "but, without vanity, it is I whom Juno cares most for ; she was faithful to me too long for me to neglect her now."

"But, my child, you cannot go without me."

At which I irreverently laughed and said :

"Don't play Henry Dedham, I entreat."

For a moment Roland did not answer, then, in a serious tone, said :

"I never wish to control you in any way. The possibility of your going twenty miles without me I cannot imagine. If you go I must go with you."

“My dear Roland, be reasonable,” I replied. “Two months ago I could take Philip and no one fancy danger. Black Beauty makes nothing of ten miles. I will not interfere with your engagements. Let us *help* each other in this life. I am quite willing to do just as you say, but am awaking to duties now, and hope you will not wish me to give Juno this sorrow.”

“My darling Milly,” he exclaimed, “if you are going to be as good as this, I shall have no peace in fear that wings are growing, and that you may take flight;” and his toilet was completed in a very spasmodic fashion.

“What did you expect?” I asked, much amused.

“I expected you to refuse to reconsider the subject, and to order the horses!”

“Then, as you are prepared, I will confess a temptation to that mode of proceeding; but it was only momentary. I feel I ought to go, and will trust you to say how.”

“What has become of your willfulness, Milly, dear?” he asked, with his arm around me.

“It is on the scale with Europe and Niagara—if you go up, I come down.”

“Driving would be less fatiguing for you; and Victor could go.”

“But I much prefer riding. Then, I want one more grand gallop.”

“I hardly know how to ask you to give this up.

The road is very steep, and accident is possible to the most sure-footed horse. This, however, is not my only reason for asking you to drive. Will you do so, *cara mia*, without knowing why I ask it?"

"You mysterious boy! are you painting Black Beauty?"

"No; yet it is a case of reappearance."

"I will do whatever you wish," I replied, with praiseworthy self-abnegation. "After all, my habit is packed; I thought I had better take it."

"Certainly; I anticipate showing you on horseback. A lady riding for pleasure is a rare sight in Germany."

"What stupid people!"

"No, not that; but, given to different estimates of pleasure from yours, they find enjoyment where you would starve, soul and body. But—breakfast—this tremendous quarrel has given me an appetite."

At breakfast, which was an hour earlier than usual, Roland's mind was relieved by Victor's pleasure in taking the two fastest horses, and driving me up in the dog-cart.

"You will go with less fatigue," he said; "and Roland and Chetwood can make notes of what I am to do for you when you are gone."

There was a slight delay before the dog-cart came. I stood gazing on the surroundings that were so dear. Roland came to me. "Milly, it will be ten minutes

before you go. I have had Black Beauty brought up for you to say good-by. Is he not superb to-day?"

I threw my arms around the neck of my favorite; patted him; stroked his nose, gave him sugar; told him I would come home some time; at which he whinnied and pawed the ground, tossed his head, and in every way tried to express his feelings. I am sure I made him understand how I appreciated him. Then, with one more stroking of his silken mane, and a good-by to Roland, I mounted up beside Victor, and we dashed off.

Our good horses made a joke of the ten miles, and Victor was always a delightful companion, particularly when his dove—Hilda—was beside him; in truth, it was a rare event when the little creature was not putting her soft coo into our conversations. We accepted the "burred" as a symbol of Victor's pure spirit, and mamma, particularly, was anxious when she missed it. I must confess that this attendant was somewhat laughed at by such as the Barbers and the Barber's poles; but we, who lived with this gentle boy, saw only beauty in his choice of this pet.

It was painfully still around Juno's little dwelling. I was accustomed, as we emerged from the wood, to see her cheery face and gorgeous turban standing at her door. This time, no Juno watched our coming.

"What can be the matter!" I exclaimed. "The house is open; they must be at home."

At that moment the head of Hercules appeared at the upper window.

"Massy sakes ! Dere's Mis Meely," and a clattering down-stairs followed, while from above I heard Juno's voice :

"Fetch her rite up, Harklis."

"What is the matter ?" I asked, as Hercules, quite out of breath, stood by the horses.

"Laws, Mis Meely, Juno's awful sik. She'll be dredful glad to see yer. She's got stabbin' pains all over her. I can't make her eat ; I'se made all I know uv fer her."

Victor was struggling with a laugh, but managed, under cover of a cough, to preserve an outward gravity, as he helped me from the carriage. "Hercules will entertain you," I whispered—hearing, "Massy, how Mas'r Vickr do cough ! I ges he's got 'sumichon."

I did not wait for Victor's defense, but ran upstairs without delay. Juno's little room was a picture of neatness. She was in bed, with her gay turban replaced by the whitest of nightcaps. On a table beside her were the evidences of her devoted husband's care ; on it stood a cup of coffee, a cup of tea, a glass of lemonade, another of jelly, an egg, beaten to a stiff froth, in a saucer, a tumbler of currant jelly and water, one of toast and water, an orange, nicely peeled, a

bowl of oatmeal gruel, one of arrowroot, a plate of roasted potatoes, and another of frizzled beef.

“Oh, I’se dredful glad ye’s come, chile! I’se got de awfulest stabbin’ pains; oh, oh! Harklis has made all he kin think of; but I’spec I ain’t got no hankerin’, ’cause I can’t eat. How’s yer husban’? is he easier ob dem fits? I wish he’d git reel chirk.”

To all of which I made the best reply I could, insisting that my “husban’” was perfectly well. I then asked whether she had seen a doctor, for she was evidently in great distress.

“Laws, Mis Meely, he didn’t know notin’. I throwed his stuff out de winder; dere ain’t notin’ de matter ’cep dese pains. I don want no fissik; he sed it was roomatis an’ newrology. Harklis would go fer him; Harklis ain’t no mor’n a baby wen I’se sik. I ain’t noways bad—jes dese pains!” and poor Juno groaned in agony. There was no convincing her that medicine would relieve her; and, as the medicine had gone out of the window, to beautify the grass, what could be done? I thought a moment, and then a remedy came to me, like a sudden inspiration.

“Juno, you must take clear lemon-juice, three times a day; don’t make it into lemonade; take it clear.”

“Laws, Mis Meely, what good ’ll dat sour stuff do? I tell yer, it’s stabbin’ pains. I ain’t sik; I ony feel despert.”

"It will do you good, I know ; what can I do for you now ?"

"Read sum to me. Harklis ain't no scholar. I want sumfin out de Bible."

"Where is your Bible?"

"Oh, I don no ; 'tain't roun, as I see. Jes say sum tex."

The first one that occurred to me was "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," which I hoped would prove appropriate, though I was quite unequal to giving religious consolation.

"Dat's good. 'Spose dat means dat I'll hole up even ef de pains moe' kill me."

"You will have strength to bear them," I suggested.

"Cum to tink uv it, don no as I like dat. I'd as lieve die as hole on wen dere so bad. Git more tex. I want sumfin to take hold."

My next venture was, "Let not your heart be troubled—" but she interrupted :

"'Tain't my heart, chile, it's dese pains, I keep a-tellin' you."

"I thought you were a Christian, Juno ; you used always to be singing hymns."

"Yes, I like hymns ; dey swing roun so easy ; but I don no as dey took hold. I want sumfin to hole on by, in de dark nites, wen Harklis is asleep ; sumfin reel strong."

I paused a moment, and recalled some words of St. Augustine, which my uncle once read to me: "In Cicero and Plato and other writers I meet with many things acutely said, and things that excite a certain warmth of emotion, but in none of them do I find such words, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'" This had never left my memory, and these sacred words I repeated to Juno.

"Dats it. Dats de berry ting, Mis Meely; I kin hole on by dem. Ef de pains is de *yoke*, dey is de *Lord's* yoke; dat is de ting; dat heps wonderful—*de Lord's yoke!* Laws! I'se dredful glad ye thought ob dem. Say dem ober agen. I declar, *dey* takes hold."

Again I repeated those wondrous words, feeling myself a hypocrite as I did so. What right had I to administer food to a starving soul, which I had not myself chosen for my own sustenance? The question troubled me while I listened to Juno's simple commentary. I had not yet told her of my errand. I wanted to do my work first, the words from *Lucille* striking me again as they had the day I threw the book from me:

"In a world full of souls that lack light,
 — there is work to be done,
 And life can withhold love and duty from none."

A note of thanksgiving rose in my soul, that the rebellion with which I first read the lines was gone. Juno moved more easily.

“Are you better, Juno?” I asked.

“Monsus site better. Dem words took hold. I’ll try de lemon juice. You tell Harklis, chile, how ter fix ’em.”

“I will tell him; and you must try to remember those words; when the hard pain comes on, they may help you.”

“Dey has heped me, don I tell yer, chile? *De Lord’s yoke*—dat’s de ting to tink uv.”

“Mamma will come and read more to you; for, Juno, dear, I am going away for a long time.”

“Massy sakes! chile, where’s yer goin’ ter?”

“Mr. Hartley and I are going to Europe, and I came up to say ‘Good-by.’”

“Goin’ on de ochum, chile?”

“Yes, Juno, in a steamship.”

“Oh, I’se awful sorry. Wen will I see you agen?”

“I cannot tell, dear Juno; but I hope you will soon be well again. Mamma will come up and tell you when she hears from us.”

“I’ll be well ’fore long; dem pains mus’ kill or cure. Tank ye, chile, fur comin’ up to-day. You’s allers bin de lite ob my eyes. I’ll miss ye dreadful, Mis Meely.”

As Juno became calmer she suffered less, but I

could not bear to leave her. The memory of her faithful care was before me. I stood a moment trying to think of something more to tell her, when she asked :

“Ef I die, whar d’ye tink I’ll go ter?”

Where! How could I answer?

“I suppose, to Paradise, Juno. I believe that is what every one thinks now. The Lord told the thief on the cross, that he would meet him in Paradise that day.”

“’Mong de angels?”

“Yes, and with those who have died.”

“Will my little gal be dere?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“D’ye tink dere’s any danger ob my turnin’ wite?”

“I don’t know. Why do you ask that?”

“’Caus I’se ’fraid my little gal won’t know me ef I turn wite.”

“There is no danger of that; she will know you, Juno.”

“I don want one ob de angels to tell her, ‘Dere’s yer mudder comin’.’ I jes want her to run rite inter my arms; dat’s how I want to fix it. Are you sure I’ll go dar, Mis Meely?”

“No, Juno; I do not know.”

“Dere’s a tex dat says sumfin ’bout ‘b’lieve on de Lord’ an’ you’ll go dar. Say it, chile.”

With a sort of gasp, for Juno’s questions gave me an unendurable responsibility, I repeated the words :

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

“Dat’s dem. Tank you, chile. I’s e all rite. I b’lieve. De good Lord bress you, chile, fer de good words you’ve tole me dis day. Ef I neber see yer no more on dis earth, I’ll see yer in Parydice. Ye won’t mine ef I’m black, will you, chile?”

“No, Juno. I will love you just as I do here.”

“Yer see, chile ; it’s ony ’cans ob my little gal. I don want to be ’splained to her ; yer won’t mine?”

These were the last words that I heard of Juno’s. She recovered from the neuralgia ; but, before I returned, the gate of Paradise had been opened for her, where she found her little girl, who, I doubt not, knew her, whatever may have been the change that fitted her mother for the company of the saints in light.

Our conversation on our drive home was subdued, from the scene I had passed through ; I could not help asking Victor if it were hypocritical in me to repeat the verses ? He fully exonerated me from any such sin, and taught me rather to be thankful that any helpful words had so impressed themselves on my memory that I was able to comfort poor Juno. Yet—yet—I would have been happier if I had spoken from the abundance of my heart. The dove came to me then with a soft coo, and Victor, stroking the silky feathers, said : “You will see the real Hilda, I hope. Roland will arrange that. I would like to know what you

think of her, Milly. She and I have been more together than is usual with young people in Germany. I had a lesson every day, and often passed my evenings there in singing. Then my old master did not watch his daughter as closely as a mother would have done, and saw no impropriety in our being in the garden, or caring for the animals together. He sat outside, under the trees, with his pipe; but Hilda and I were not overheard. We are not 'betrothed,' Milly, according to the custom there, but—she knows I love her."

"I like all you have told me about her. She seems so different from other young girls, and I do like something out of the common groove."

"Yes; so do I; if the difference is on the right side, and is not an eccentricity. She would be very out of place among the gay parties we have had this summer. I cannot fancy Hilda with a sweeping train, or in our luxurious rooms."

"Women take readily to fine clothes and fine furniture," I replied, with a light laugh.

"No, Hilda would be miserable. Her nature is as refined and delicate as yours, dear sister; but her surroundings have been such that the conventionalities of life here would be a weary burden to her."

"What do you propose to do about it, then?" I asked.

"If necessary, I will give my life for hers," he answered, quietly.

I was not entirely converted to Hilda. My education was strong on the "fitness of things;" and that Victor should sacrifice himself for her seemed very unnecessary; but I had sense enough not to oppose him, and replied: "Perhaps I will find capabilities in her that you have not suspected; you may yet see her resplendent in diamonds and velvet, and serene as mamma under Prescott's oppressive attentions."

"Heaven forbid!" he returned, laughing. "If a dog whined, the diamonds and the velvet would be seen rushing to the rescue, and Prescott would die on the spot."

In the midst of the merriment of this picture we reached home. Roland, mamma, and Mr. Chetwood were on the piazza. Roland looked bored and weary; but oh, the change! the glorious light that burst upon his face as we drove up!

Our luncheon was very pleasant, though rather later than usual. Mr. Chetwood finished his work, and left us; then Roland and I made a pilgrimage.

First, to our father's room. It had never been disturbed. My picture stood on the floor; it had been arranged by him so that Roland's first idea was perfected. A frame, to represent a doorway, surrounded it, over which the curtain with the gold fringe formed a drapery. My raised hand seemed to hold the curtain, and the illusion of a figure about to enter was complete.

I exclaimed, as the idea flashed upon me : “ Do you remember about your mother, and the blue velvet curtain ? You have placed me in just the position that uncle described, when his Nina came from her room. Did you know it when you were painting ? ”

“ No, nor did I think of it till now. I have been too much occupied with you, Milly, and have not thought since of the tears in his eyes when he first saw the picture. See the carving of this frame—it is not a frame, it is a door-way ; it is three-sided. Until this moment I never thought of a reason for papa’s careful directions to the carver. He drew the pattern himself : griffins, lions’ heads and birds. I know it all now. Victor and I went once to the Villa of Bellargio ; we saw the faded curtain hanging between two rooms, and we amused ourselves with the quaintly carved heads of the door-frame. This was only finished a few days before his death. It is a regular discovery.”

“ It must remain a secret,” I replied, “ for Victor must not know this memory of your mother.”

Roland assented, but with gravity.

“ Secrets burden me like crimes,” was his answer.

“ You endured the one of your own making bravely,” I reminded him.

“ It made a wreck of me, and I was so filled with self-reproach at what I had said to Ellen Ramsay that I had no peace. Your full forgiveness saved me, Milly.”

"I was sadly bewildered, but, Roland, I believed you before you explained."

"Yes, my darling; that is a treasured memory."

"We have no time for reminiscences if we are to have kindly thoughts to follow us."

"Ah, Milly, sometime we will be in the land where love is in the air, where it will be first and last and all the time."

"You did not reach any very startling climax," I laughed, as we walked to the dairy, to say good-by to the mistress of the milk-pans; thence to the woodman's cottage, where the tribe of little ones eyed us with such awe as the antediluvians may have felt for Mr. and Mrs. Noah. "Now the stable; one more look at Black Beauty."

"The groom has taken him out; let us speak to the other horses and to King."

"How odd in Philip; he must have known I wanted to see him."

"My darling Milly, you bade him good-by this morning."

"But that was no affair of Philip's."

"I must confess that I have sent Philip and your horse on an errand—"

"Forgive me, Roland," and, vexed that I had asked for him, I threw myself on the ground beside King, my faithful, noble-hearted King. For years he had been my constant companion; walking or driving,

King guarded me ; in my lonely rambles in the Wilderness, King was ready to destroy any one who might molest me ; he was entirely devoted to my service, and fully understood my words. I had left him till the last, and now I told him I was going to leave him—a low, entreating whine was the answer. “I will come back to you, King.” A wag of the tail acknowledged this. “You must take care of everything for me.” A vigorous wagging assured me nothing should be neglected. “Now, dear doggie, shake hands.” His great paw was offered to me. I held it as I would have done the hand of a friend. “Now, King, go and shake hands with Roland.” This was done, but in great haste, to return to me ; then his head came close beside my face, and, notwithstanding Roland’s horror, I kissed his broad, beautiful forehead again and again. Nothing was said until he ventured to return my kisses. I could not repulse him ; it was the last time.

“Neither Kings nor Princes can kiss my wife. Really, Milly, I can’t stand it ; it’s too much to ask of a fellow,” exclaimed Roland. I did not dare to laugh, lest King’s feelings should be wounded, but cut short the caresses ; and, with one more long look at the eyes that were fixed on me with that deep, pathetic sadness, that comes only in the gaze of a dumb animal, we left him, and returned to the house. The guests who came in the evening were considerate in

leaving early, but it was late before mamma and I finished our last word ; even then, Roland and Victor were still pacing the terrace arm in arm.

It was useless to try to sleep at all. We were to breakfast at five o'clock ; the steamer sailed at eleven, and we could only reach New York in time by taking an early train.

In the morning I found King at my door ; he had kept out of sight until I was in my room—for what remained of the night ; during those hours he watched. Victor did not go to bed ; we found him asleep in an arm-chair, when we came down. As to Prescott, he was as vigorous and attentive as if our candle-light breakfast were a full-dress dinner. King shared all that I ate that morning ; and, after every other farewell was over, he had one more parting kiss.

“Hilda could have done no more,” whispered Victor.

Mamma and Victor went with us to the city ; and at the appointed hour, our good steamer sailed majestically out of the bay, as if it never yielded to the weakness of a lingering thought. Inexorably it separated us from home and those we loved ; but as long as possible we gazed back, until we could not even distinguish the waving handkerchiefs, that seemed like white wings bearing messages of love. As I turned away, I heard, “Mine ! mine ! mine !”

CHAPTER XII.

WE GO TO SEE THE VINTAGE.



HE voyage, though so new and full of interest to me, was, I was told, very like all voyages. We were fortunate in being well, even during a storm ; and every day brought me new experiences. My life heretofore had been, in a measure, secluded, although never lonely ; and I had an odd sensation that I was for the first time trying my wings—trying them, with a certainty of safety that no instinct could give the bravest little bird. For who but I had Roland !

We made pleasant acquaintances, and I wondered at the good-nature shown, even by the sufferers in their arm-chairs ! There were the usual routine of entertainments ; the great excitement of a vessel in sight, the spouting of a whale, the porpoises and the sea-gulls, and the less one of shuffle-board. In the evenings, we sang for the circle that gathered around us, and took prominent part in the Trial, which, I was told, was one of the time-honored amusements. It was new to me ; and the grave charge against Roland, that he had been seen putting pepper in eggs, was, at first, quite incomprehensible. I soon understood the

joke ; and when I was called as a witness, and affirmed, on a Webster's Dictionary, that I would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I was obliged to confess that my husband had committed this crime.

Roland pleaded guilty, making a defense, on the ground of ignorance, that convulsed the court with laughter. His face was immovable, as became one in great peril, but his wit was irresistible. He was found guilty, and recommended to mercy, on the ground of youth and inexperience. We waited the sentence in a mood for which the judge reproved us, as unbefitting the gravity of the occasion and the enormity of the offense, but his reproof was received with a laugh that increased our levity to "contempt of court."

The sentence was : "Roland Hartley is found guilty. He is condemned to sing, or play on some musical instrument, every evening, as long as the last lingerer on deck requires. In this, Mildred, his wife, the accomplice of his crime, must join." Shouts and applause followed the sentence, and justice requires me to state that Roland, and Mildred, his wife, performed it to the last letter of the law.

There is something unique in life on a vessel ; the impossibility of escape makes even the most morose try to add to the general amusement, and even the faintest jokes receive great applause. I remember our merriment over a man who braved the restrictions

which confined roasted apples to invalids, triumphantly displaying his success, after having represented himself to the much-aggravated steward as "two sick ladies." Then, the amusing gusto with which he ate his stolen fruit was very comical.

The long conversations which I expected to have with Roland, during our evenings on deck, never came off. We were rarely alone, and coming out into the world, I told him, had a dark side, in my being obliged to share his society with so many.

"A vessel is a microcosm," he said. "We will be alone when we are lost in a crowd."

Of this, and its enjoyment, I was skeptical; and experience has since shown me that Roland can never be "lost in a crowd." His individuality asserts itself everywhere.

Happily as our days passed, the sight of land was hailed with joy, and many locations of interest pointed out, before we anchored at Bremerhafen. After landing, we were not long in reaching the old city itself, where we only, of all the company, remained. The rest, whom we had known so well, went as soon as trains could take them.

Roland was so determined I should understand that we were not tourists, but pleasure seekers, that I was much surprised by being told we were to "see something in Bremen." He hurried me from the hotel and the crowd of people whom we knew, to the

Dom, where we listened to the grand organ, and saw a brass font, about which I heard a long history ; and, it being my first introduction to the wonders of the Old World, was greatly impressed thereby. Then I was allowed a hasty survey of the Rathhaus, a very fine Gothic building, and, by especial permit, was taken into the cellar to see the "Twelve Apostles." I naturally expected to find statues, and was much scandalized by being shown twelve casks of wine. A glass of pure Rhenish was given me—there being a sort of restaurant there—of which I expressed such dislike, that Roland hastened my return above ground.

"You shall now see how I am immortalized," he said. I was told to look at a Roland statue, opposite the Rathhaus ; it was eighteen feet in height, a sword in one hand, raised in a menacing way, on the other arm a shield. "This is how I looked when I went on a crusade," observed my husband.

"You were remarkably hideous, and taller than you are now ! Is this *the* Rolando of Ariosto ?"

"Now, my dear, on this side of the ocean I must be permitted to indulge my fancy. I cannot be reduced to fragments in this way. Will it affect your happiness if you do not know the life, death and achievements of this individual ?"

"It will, really," I replied, laughing.

Whereupon, adopting the manner of the guide who

expounded the font to us, he began, jerking out his sentences as he had done :

“This statue is one of twenty-eight, erected in as many German towns, supposed by some to be a symbol of the rights and privileges of the towns ; by others, claimed to be a statue of Roland, a paladin, a nephew of Charlemagne. Will that do, Themei ?”

“The style is unexceptionable ; go on.”

“An account of him,” he continued, with a deep sigh, “can be found (if you look) in an old French romance, recording the adventures of Charlemagne and his paladins. He is also (be attentive) the original of the Orlando of Ariosto. Is that enough, Themei ?”

“No, Roland ; I must know all you know.”

“Would you ‘be carried away by the flood,’ Themei ? Am I to give histories of equal length, breadth and thickness about all the statues we may see ? I wish this point settled *now*, Minerva,” he said, with gravity.

“It is impossible for me to tell what future exigencies may require,” I returned, laughing at his long face ; “but do tell me the truth about this odd figure.”

“To hear is to obey. These statues are called Rolandsäulen, also Rügelandssäulen, which suggests Rüge, a word formerly meaning a court of justice ; and so, as Murray will tell you, the sword may indi-

cate judgment, instead of the mercy, which those who fought for the Cross are supposed to have remembered. The idea in regard to mercy is purely original, Themel, and this is all I know. Would you object to leaving Bremen by the next train, or shall I send for chairs? for stand another minute I cannot."

I took his arm for answer, and telling him I now had a delightful sensation of having begun the wonders of the Old World, and congratulated myself on owning a peripatetic guide-book, that could read itself aloud, we returned in high spirits to the hotel, where some good coffee refreshed us for the journey.

We obtained a comfortable compartment in the train; where it was revealed to me that the wish for sight-seeing in Bremen was invented to avoid the crowd that went directly on from the steamer. A rare traveler this husband of mine proved himself. Rests and refreshments were prepared for me before I thought of them, and wherever we stopped, I found I added something to my little store of knowledge.

We stopped over a train at Frankfort to see Danneker's statue of Ariadne, which, Roland gravely informed me, no educated female could venture to omit, particularly after having eaten it in ice cream! I professed great gratitude at being shown anything, insisting that his wish to keep me in ignorance was lest his superiority might be questioned.

"Never fear, Minerva," he replied; "all in good

time ; I am only a boy ; we have a lifetime before us ; let me direct this little journey, and you may take charge of our travels ever after."

I had no wish to thwart him ; and just in time to see the last gilding of the sun on the beautiful Neckar, we drove along the street on its bank, to the Heidelberg hotel, known as the Prinz Karl.

Rooms, having been telegraphed for, were ready for us. The "gentlemanly proprietor" received us, expressing so much pleasure at seeing Herr Hartley again that I suspected he had seen no one in the interval. To this, Herr Hartley made what seemed to me very profuse returns, presenting his wife with much effusion.

I made some faint objection to this, when we were safe in our rooms, but was told—"it is all right in Germany. We are in agonies of shyness till we are betrothed or married ; then, every emotion can be made public. I shall endeavor to control mine, Diana, but you must pardon an occasional outburst ; because I am a solitary instance of a man having accomplished all he desires in life, when but little over twenty-one. Naturally, Diana, I feel elated at a success owing entirely to my personal bravery."

There was no redress for me when Roland was in one of these moods. I could only submit to his high spirits, and to being made comfortable in our new quarters, and to having every wish provided for. For

not until he was fully satisfied that this was done, did he say he must go to the Bodenhausens. There had been no opportunity to reply to Gretchen's letter, except a few lines from Bremen, which could not have long preceded us; and, her heart being set on the proposed "Fest," our coming must needs be announced. Roland returned for a sort of "high tea," which supplemented our hasty dinner at Frankfort, and had by no means recovered from his boyish mood.

No, I was not to be prepared for anything, nor to be told anything more about anybody.

"But, Roland, do tell me whom you saw, and whether they were glad to see you. *Do*, Roland!"

"That pathos overcomes me. Resume your tone of command, my Juno, lest I should be induced to yield," he replied. "I will tell you that I saw Hilda. It was partly dark in the entrance-room; I heard her and the Frau consulting about a donkey, who seemed to have broken his leg; whether to shoot him or to cure him was so important, that I was meekly waiting till donkey's fate was decided—when Fräulein Gretchen discovered me, and shouted, 'He is come!' Then, such a time! But I am telling."

"You reveal but little. What about Hilda?"

"I promised to take you to see her as soon as possible. She sent kind messages, and regretted she could not be present on the morrow, when your arrival will be celebrated—Hem! She will, however, send 'repre-

sentatives ;' but whether they will be cows with crumpled horns, or horses all forlorn, or dogs all tattered and torn, did not transpire."

"You are too absurd," was all my reply ; for, by experience, I knew there was no hope of a serious answer.

On the morrow—another delicious day—breakfast being late, and dinner being early, there was hardly time for a walk. We went to the bridge, and looked up and down the beautiful river, and had one of the views of the castle, the sun resting on the octagon tower, and lighting up the terrace and the river front. I saw, too, the Bodenhausen's house, and felt in a strange maze of bewilderment at all that was so new. Not two weeks from Hartley Hall and its smooth-going luxuriousness, and here—a different world!

On our return to the hotel, while Roland went again across the river, I arranged my trunks, and made every preparation to leave immediately after dinner. When he returned he looked at me rather more critically than usual, I generally having the good fortune to please him.

"The little girl is in an ecstasy about you," he said. "I hope you will be able to enjoy her mode of doing you honor. You must put on some gorgeous dress, for she will measure your appreciation of your reception by the beauty of your toilet."

“My dear boy, everything is packed. Surely this black silk will do.”

He surveyed it. “No, fair nun, by no means ;” and in a moment my dress trunk was what we women call “upset,” a blue silk—a favorite of my husband’s—was most unceremoniously drawn out, certain laces and bracelets selected, the rest put back according to a man’s idea of packing, and Roland, with the voice and gesture of my faithful Bridget, stood waiting : “Ef ye plaze, Miss Milly, wull ye dress yerself now, fur Mister Roland wull be a waitin’ fur ye ?”

There was no help for it. My intuitions as to proprieties were of no avail ; it was utterly impossible to oppose Roland, whose inconsequent talk never ceased. I was soon ready, and about four o’clock we drove over to the foot of the mountain of All Saints, on the slope of which was Roland’s old home. The garden rises at the back of the house, and in it stood the arbor of which I had heard. The square stone house, with its balconies at the upper windows, looked very attractive ; and amid my expressions of delight at all the surroundings, we entered the gate of the garden. With the amused look which Roland had worn all day, he directed my attention to an arch of evergreens and flowers, in which the word Welcome was entwined.

“Here your festivities begin,” he whispered, as, with the brightest of faces, the good Frau and Gretchen

came running toward us, followed by Mona, the house-servant. With every kind expression that their language contained, with a torrent of congratulations, and all the titles they could bestow upon us—of which “most gracious lady” was one—I was presented with a superb bouquet.

I made the best use I could of my small stock of German, and bowed and thanked, and thanked and bowed, until we reached the arbor. Roland prevented my seeing the view from there until I was sufficiently impressed with the arbor itself. No vine roots were visible ; it was entirely covered with evergreens, vines, and flowers. The gay flowers of the autumn made it a mass of bright coloring, so that, literally, Gretchen had fulfilled her promise—the arbor was decked with gladness. At that moment, a merry little German song of welcome was sung by some children concealed behind the bushes. I was enchanted ; and, remembering one which was appropriate as an answer, without thought of preparation followed at once, singing as well as I ever sang anything. The delighted faces of my entertainers, and their applause, quite repaid me, while the gentle pressure of Roland’s arm told me that I had gratified him ; so in high good humor we entered the arbor, where a small table, with fruit, white rolls, and wine, looked most inviting. I was placed opposite the door ; and then, the silver Neckar, lighted by the level rays of the setting sun, the town bordering it, with its

long street, the mountains and the castle, were before me. My first sensations were of gratitude, and then of joy, that all day and every day my eyes could be thus feasted. I could say but little ; my own insignificance seemed to close the avenues of expression ; but the little was satisfactory to those who were ready to be pleased with whatever I did. Then I insisted on seeing the hidden children—who, I found, were the “representatives” promised by Hilda—and had much ado to make them raise their eyes to my wonderful self ; but they were not backward in accepting the Frau’s nice cakes, running off with them in great glee.

We had a pleasant conversation. Our hostess was intelligent. Her husband had been a professor. He died when Gretchen was an infant, leaving nothing but his books to his widow, the house and grounds being the property of the grandmother. Even Gretchen, with all her hard work, had found time for books, joining very pleasantly in our conversation. She spoke good English, too, but as I was anxious to improve in German, her efforts in that direction were not encouraged.

When we left the arbor we walked under more arches, to the house, where, in the doorway, sat the Grossmutter. She was a dear old lady, wrinkled and infirm to a marvel, but her face was almost beautiful as she spoke her kindly words of welcome to me.

“The good Master gives you much joy, my child.

‘When he openeth his hand, we are filled with good ; when he hideth his face, we are troubled ;’ but his strength comes with the sorrow. Therefore, fail not to enjoy what you now have, trusting him with your future.”

I strove to keep the tears from my eyes, and to reply cheerfully, but it was Roland who said, with solemn words of praise :

“I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live ; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.”

“Thank God !” fervently replied the old lady.

We passed to an inner room, festooned and garlanded, as were all parts of the house. Gretchen’s eyes danced as I noticed or tried to notice each new device, some sentence or word being so skillfully intertwined that it took me some time to decipher them all. She showed me which were made by Hilda, and told me, in confidence, that she came at dawn to give her assistance. The second floor was devoted to our use, and was as gay with “Blumen” as the arbor. It was a home-coming to Roland, as he and Victor, with their tutor, lived here for ten years.

“I cannot realize Hartley Hall and its short-lived pleasures,” he said. “Yet it and they have made my life what it is now.”

One of our rooms was much more decorated than the others. Gretchen said that Hilda so arranged it for my dressing-room. Presently, Roland revealed

that it was the room formerly used by Victor for his study. After this piece of information, I suspected that the beauty of my dressing-room was a secondary consideration, but I may have done Fräulein Hilda an injustice, for who can detect even one's own motives?

Little Gretchen kissed my hand. "You are at home now, most gracious lady. You will command me how I serve you," she said in her English; and then we were alone.

The windows were open on the balcony; it was still warm; the sun was down; town and castle were in shadow, and the Neckar looked dark. I stood outside, with a thanksgiving in my heart. Roland's dear arm was around me. "*Mein Liebchen*, are you content?" was his welcome.

CHAPTER XIII.

HILDA AND THE OLD HARPIST.



THE following day Roland told me more about Hilda.

“It may have seemed to you, Milly, that I was unsympathetic with Victor at home, for I never encouraged him to talk of Hilda; he is too many years older than I for me to advise him, but I thought we owed it to papa to return to him with our future hopes unsettled, and to consult him in regard to them. In this Victor agreed with me, and did not, in words, tell Hilda of his love for her. When we were at home, the incongruity of her life and occupations with papa’s style of living struck us both so deeply, that we avoided the subject. Whenever it came up as we talked together of the past, Victor said: ‘I am glad nothing is decided; I will never give her up, nor will I bring her here, unless papa wishes it. I must wait.’ He afterwards spoke to you of her, and told mamma the whole story.”

“I liked all he told me, and a man must marry for himself. I told him he did not know how soon a woman could adapt herself to new circumstances.”

“It is not only that, Milly. Hilda’s beauty and accomplishments would cover any *gaucheries*, if, in-

deed, her intuitions permitted her to fall into them—but she is odd ; she is unconventional ; here, she is actually avoided ; little Gretchen is almost her only friend. The mammas here will not allow their cherished nonentities to speak to her ; one would suppose they feared she carried hydrophobia around with her. Persons with *missions* are not admitted into well-ordered German society. To see Hilda kneeling beside a donkey, and binding up his broken leg, would send some of my friends into convulsions ; even you would suffer in their estimation if you were to indulge in one of those gallops in which your soul delights. Hilda is deprived of society ; she lives alone with her father and her animals ; the children whom she teaches love her, and Gretchen braves public opinion whenever she goes there.”

“But there is none of this at home,” I exclaimed, my heart warming to the persecuted girl. “She may bind up broken limbs all day, without let or hindrance, provided she will be beautiful and well-dressed in the evening.”

“I confess the difficulties vanish a little in regard to this, but it is doubtful if Hilda will leave her home ; her father is too old to move, and she considers her work a religious duty.”

“Miserable animals are everywhere,” I returned. “Her father will not live many more years ; Hilda will go with Victor, *if she loves him.*”

“When you have seen her, you can better tell whether this will ever be. Meanwhile, I think Victor’s marriage with Hilda means isolation in Heidelberg.”

This conversation took place at our breakfast. What I thought of Hilda will best be told by an extract from a letter to mamma, which I wrote a few days after seeing her. I found out from Gretchen that she would not come to meet me, lest she might find that I would also disapprove of her self-chosen occupation. Whether I did, the following extract will tell :

“And now for Hilda, beautiful, lovely, fascinating Hilda—how can I *ever* tell you of the impression produced by her home, her father, her mission and herself.

“It was the day after Gretchen’s little *fête*. The vines and flowers still decorated the house. Roland and I had taken our breakfast in the sitting-room on the second floor, and were gazing with a never-to-be-satisfied joy on the view from our window. ‘Will you rest to-day, Milly, or do you feel like a ride, a drive, or a visit first to Hilda?’ he asked.

“‘Hilda, first,’ I replied, ‘for we are not to see the castle till the afternoon.’

“As we passed through the lower rooms, where every one was at work, but looked up with a cheery word of welcome, I felt so guiltily idle that it was a relief to take the trembling hand of the grandmother,

whose day of rest has come, and see her face lighted with a smile as she saw Roland. Did you ever notice, mamma, how *every one* smiles on Roland? There is a perpetual lighting up of faces as he approaches; life is so beautiful with him.

“But Hilda, Hilda! She lives about a quarter of a mile farther down the river—a little lane, leading from the main road, a low fence, a gate, hardly a lawn—just a grass plot—then a porch, covered with flowers, and on it a young girl in a plain working dress, neat as a Lebanon Shakeress. She is holding up her apron, to catch the flowers which she is cutting. She did not see us until we were close to the gate, and then her face lighted with pleasure, as she came toward us. She dropped her flowers, and gave a hand to each. ‘You are most welcome,’ she said, in English, and in the kindest fashion took us inside the house, keeping my hand all the time. Her old father was seated in a chair, beside a harp. His organ was open; violins and music were everywhere. He rose to greet us, thanked us for coming, spoke to Roland as if he were a son, and then, fortunately for Hilda, asked after Victor. We enlarged greatly on this topic, and then, naturally, came to music, and the overwhelming delight that a thorough understanding of it gives. I had used this expression. The old man’s reply I will never forget.

“‘Pardon me, dear lady; we can only reach the

border-land here. Our music now is but a shadowy promise of what it will be. We are tuning our instruments ; we are practicing our parts ; we are resolving the discords ; we know not true music. If we had heard the sons of God sing together their song of praise, if we had heard our Lord sing with his disciples after the Supper, we might have had some guide, some model, for our harmonies and melodies ; but now, it is but the blind man stretching out his hands.'

"And then he turned to his harp ; and, sweeping over the strings, there came a distant sound, like singing. Nearer and nearer it approached, until—none of us knew why nor how—we all united in one of the grandest doxologies I have ever heard. If it were *not* music, surely we will need divine power to bear a holier expression of praise !

"I was perfectly overcome. Victor had not half told me of what I was to hear. The old man did not speak. He seemed rapt in soul-communion. Hilda put her arm around me—for we had risen while singing—and drew me gently from the room.

"'Father will not know anything for a while,' she whispered. 'Has Victor told you of my hospital? Come and see my birds.'

"She was trying to change the subject for me. It was wise in her. We followed to her 'bird-house,' or aviary. There were about twenty birds inside of a large wire cage. All of them had met with some kind

of accident. 'I would not keep them confined if they could take care of themselves,' she explained. There were two nightingales with broken wings; one little bird with his leg in *splints*; another with only one leg; one was blind, and all more or less dilapidated. I then and there astonished Hilda by throwing my arms around her, and kissing her. She blushed, laughing a little soft bit of music, and said, 'Thank you, thank you; I am so glad you like it.'

"Roland looked amused at my new enthusiasm, and himself led the way to the dog-house.

"'Will you look at them through this window?' said Hilda. 'I think it wounds them a little to have strangers see their bandages. I will go in; I want you to see how they love music.'

"There was a sort of rude vestibule, or entrance, and, on one side, a pane of glass roughly set in beside the door. Through this we looked. Our approach, or rather Hilda's, had been responded to by a series of low sounds—partly whines, partly suppressed barks, partly the pounding of their tails on the floor. As she entered, this increased ten-fold. Two of the dogs, who could walk about, tried to jump upon her. She patted their heads, but quieted them. The others—there were eight—raised their heads; one sat up—all looked, as parched and weary travelers might look on discovering a crystal fountain.

"She went around to each bed—in some cases al-

tered the bandages. One poor dog had a broken leg ; others had been shot or bitten ; several must have been suffering severely ; but no pain could prevent their expressions of gratitude ; each one, true to German fashions, kissed her hand, and every eye followed her movements. It was a most wonderful and indescribable scene. She carried water to them all ; and then said, as if she were speaking to intelligent children : ‘ Now, if you will be very still, I will sing to you.’ This was said in German ; then followed exactly what we hear in church when the people are preparing to listen to the sermon—a kind of preparatory rustle, or it would have been a rustle if the present listeners had worn silk dresses ; it was the movement of each dog into a comfortable position. She waited a moment ; then sang clearly and simply a bright little song, with some imitations of nature’s melodies. It was listened to in perfect stillness, and with evident enjoyment. ‘ Good dogs,’ said Hilda, when she had finished, ‘ good-by.’ The wagging began again, and we heard it even after the door closed on the priestess of this mission of humanity.

“ ‘ I always sing them a morning hymn,’ she said ; ‘ but that was hours ago ; this was an extra indulgence. I wanted you to see their human eyes.’ ”

“ ‘ It is very wonderful, Hilda ; you have a marvelous power over them.’ ”

“ ‘ I think any one could do the same,’ she said.

‘I only treat them according to the rule which our Master gave; such care as I would like for myself, I give them; I regard their feelings as I wish mine to be regarded. Any one could do the same. Will you come in now, and let me give you some fruit?’

“The old man had come back to earth again, and talked pleasantly to us, while Hilda went for her fruit. Roland followed her, and presently brought in the tray, Hilda remonstrating with him. ‘You know this is the one German fashion I do not like,’ he explained to me; ‘the men are waited on, and calmly receive such attentions as we ought to pay.’

“‘It is our custom,’ said Hilda. ‘Perhaps we accomplish more from not having to wait for help.’

“‘I have no doubt of that,’ laughed Roland. ‘It was a long while before I could reach a door or gate before Mildred. Even now I believe she refrains from opening them in pity for my struggles.’

“We laughed; and, avoiding any emotional conversation, had a very delightful hour; and yet Hilda is never merry. I would describe her as radiantly happy. She is very beautiful, but so quaintly dressed! She brought us lovely bouquets, and then we bade them good-by, begging for a return visit before long, leaving the little cottage, wiser, I think, and better.

“‘Why is it, Roland,’ I asked, ‘that we are so exhausted from deep emotion? I could have cried from weariness, after that music.’

“ ‘My darling,’ he answered, ‘music appeals to the divine life which is within us—to the imprisoned soul. Do you wonder that we feel her struggle to be free, when she hears her native tongue? Music is the *language* of the court of heaven.’

“Then, mamma, he told me of those beautiful things of which he alone thinks—of the future music of our finished and perfected lives, of which we sometimes gain a glimpse, as it were—when music lifts our souls above all the jars and discords of life—of nature’s music, from the highest bird-note of woodland melodies, to the deep diapason of the wind among the giants of the forest. He says he thinks Wagner has a gleam of truth, but his nature is not spiritual enough to develop it. What treason this would be among some of our friends! Roland is very like his father; for in the midst of this, when I had half reached the clouds, he said: ‘I must introduce you to Max to-day; he, too, must bow down before my queen.’

“I repeat this last nonsense, dear mamma, because Max utterly refused to acknowledge any allegiance to me. No persuasions of his master or of mine could induce him to let me touch him.

“ ‘There is another horse inside,’ he told me, ‘who is more gentle. He has been neighing ever since he heard our voices, and is the one I propose you shall ride.’

“ ‘His neigh,’ I replied, ‘by some odd association

of sound, took me home and reminded me of Black Beauty.'

" 'You will not like him less for that,' he said, and then himself led out the horse.

"How can I tell you my surprise, when my own beautiful pet stood before me. You have known it all the time, but to me the surprise was perfect and entire. I had never for a moment thought of the possibility of such a transportation. He was in the steamer with us, and here sooner than we. What I said to Roland you may imagine, and perhaps can as easily see me put both arms around his neck—I mean Black Beauty's—as he rested it over my shoulder. I was almost afraid he would spring on me, but Roland subdued his great joy. I was perfectly delighted; and, as I asked how he bore the voyage, his own groom, Philip, came out, vainly trying to keep his face as solemn as his idea of propriety told him was necessary. The whole thing was a success, and I, persisting in not being tired—as a well-regulated woman ought to have been after a voyage, a journey, and a *fête*—was all ready for a ride. Our riding-suits were soon put on, and we cantering off. Roland says that this riding, which I do not mean to relinquish, will be looked upon by my new friends with disfavor. It is thought strong-minded, unconventional, and peculiar. Fortunately, the Americans are counted 'odd,' and that is my only hope of being treated with indulgence

in spite of my riding. Hilda is really *tabooed*. Society here—which, by-the-bye, I mean to avoid—has distinctions and restrictions that I cannot understand. Hilda is entitled to some position, through some ancestor, of which her ‘mission’ to her animals deprives her. Oddities are not admitted among well-bred people! It is all very amusing to me, for, mentally, Hilda is the superior of any girl of her age I have hitherto met anywhere. However, I have not been here long enough to begin strictures on society, and I have no time to waste in visiting. Among the English and Americans, I yet know very few, and the German ladies whom Roland knows, wait for my first call. So, dear mamma, my regeneration, socially, will not take place in Heidelberg.

“I have by no means finished the account of my second day.

“Our ride was short, because, *nolens volens*, Roland would make me rest before going to the castle. We dined early, at the hotel, as on the day before, and then returned to our rooms, where dear little Gretchen was waiting to give me any assistance I might need. The way that she gets off ‘most gracious lady’ to me, requires all my self-control to endure.

“The elaborate titles here would need a year’s study—but you care more for our sayings and doings than for all the German women, so I will rush to the castle. And this I have no intention of describing;

Victor will be your guide-book, as I tell you what we did.

“About four o’clock we drove over the bridge, and up the hill on a very nice carriage road, entering the castle precincts at the garden, into which we passed by the gateway, built by the Elector Frederick for his bride, the lovely daughter of James I. We walked through the garden, to the English palace, which is so called from this same princess; and thence to the terrace. Roland is by no means a tourist; he is so far deferring all explorations for some unknown future, so that on that day I was only allowed to remark that ‘these are walls,’ and then we were on the terrace, and the valley of the Neckar burst upon my sight.

“We have come before frost has touched a leaf; the emerald hues fully repay our haste; the richness and glory of the scene was wonderful. On the east, the mountains cut off the river, so that it seems to be a lake; to the west, the valleys of the Neckar and of the Rhine are outspread; the streams are bordered with vineyards and every luxuriance, while far in the distance rise the Alsatian hills. The Neckar winds among these fertile plains, reflecting everything so perfectly that another green world seemed revealed beneath its waves, and I gazed with a longing to explore that fairy land below. Our first evening on the terrace can never be forgotten. We have glimpses of perfect happiness even here; do we not, mamma?

Old friends of Roland's came to us, and said nice things to his wife ; but that ungrateful wife was wondering if she would ever reach a mountain top where Roland's friends were not. That is unworthy of me, mamma, or rather of the good woman whom I mean to be, so I will not trust myself to write another line."

CHAPTER XIV.

I SEE THE VINTAGE AND OUR PALACE.



HE new, bright life at Heidelberg was delightful. We took some excursion each day, generally on horseback, visiting all the wonders of the guide-book, and many places of equal interest with which Roland was familiar. Once we had a trout supper at Wolf's Brünnen, which was gay with laughter and song from Hilda and Gretchen; but usually we did not allow our duties to our fellow-creatures to burden us. The most delightful pleasure-ground was the castle. We viewed it from every point; we explored every corner; we studied its history; we took lunches and coffee in the garden, growing mentally under its instruction—for Heidelberg Castle is an education. We ascended the hill of All Saints; we tried to be profound in the philosopher's walk; we visited the convent; and, on rainy days, "did" the churches and library.

One morning I was wakened by an odor of grapes; it was soon after our arrival, and was quite overpowering.

"What is it?" I exclaimed. "Is the Frau making grape jelly?"

“Look out of the window, Milly,” said my husband.

I looked. It was the vintage. The people were all at work; the road was alive with men, women, and children. Baskets of fragrant fruit were being carried—some on wagons, some between two stalwart Germans, some on their heads. The children were watching for all that fell upon the ground, which they ate—no, *devoured* is the word—with Germanic expressions of delight. What with the heaps of gathered grapes, and the quantities of those that were crushed, the scent that filled the air had a weight of indescribable sweetness.

We hastened down-stairs, and walked to the nearest vineyard. The grapes are suffered to remain on the vines until nearly decayed, so that the plucking must be performed with great care. Only two layers of fruit are placed in each basket, and these separated by vine leaves. The skill and dexterity with which this was done was very interesting. I must say, however, that I did not see the extreme jollity indicated by the pictures. A sort of stolid content, and an apparent pleasure in the actual work, was about all the poetry I could find in the people. The grapes themselves were much more satisfactory; during their lives they purpled the land with their rich and beautiful coloring, and now, in dying, perfumed the air with a sweetness that it was a luxury to inhale.

After having indulged in this peculiar form of luxury till I was weary of it, Roland mildly suggested that we had some distance to walk to reach our breakfast. "Positively, Milly," he said, "my daily increasing happiness requires an amount of food that is alarming. The romantic nature of my devotion absorbs my entire spiritual being, so that my bodily nature is left to the prosaic support of food."

"We had coffee before we came out."

"Coffee, my best beloved, is merely a temporary expedient. I need coffee and rolls, with—oh, my angel—a beefsteak! such as, when well done, it were well it were done quickly."

"I thought you had an English tutor?"

"I had, my angel; I was tutored by a native Shakspearean; it is because of this I speak so often in the words of the immortal bard."

"I wonder he does not rise and murder you," I replied, laughing.

"He would, my love, doubtless, but he is morbidly sensitive about disturbing his bones; and even ghosts, if I understand them rightly, require a framework on which to hang their white robes. Is 'robes' the word? I am not exactly 'up' in spiritual wardrobes. Even I perceive, mortal that I am, the odor of the steak; if you prefer grapes, do not come in from civility—remain with the vintage."

"The vintage is well enough; it is more pic-

turesque than haymaking, but so far I do not think it was worth crossing the ocean for."

"Did you cross for the vintage, my dear?"

"I am sure, Roland, it was the reason you gave for our haste."

"True, Themei, I remember. Your accuracy is above all praise. There were, however, other reasons which had weight with me; but I recall it all now—you yielded to my entreaties when I had only gone as far as the vintage, which was but the first of a long list. Strict veracity, Themei, requires me to deny that we crossed the ocean to see this rather *messy* condition of things. Take care," for, as a commentary upon his words, I was about treading upon a cluster fallen at the gate. I gathered up my skirts, and, laughing, as I always did when Roland was in one of his merry moods, we entered our homelike dwelling, where I found myself as ready as Roland to enjoy the delicious breakfast that Mona was keeping hot for us.

Soon after this, occasional frosts warned us of the coming winter, but the days were delightful for the rides and excursions to which I have referred. We lingered as long as possible, till we learned—Roland said—all that Heidelberg contained outside of its professors. We had followed the grapes to the vats, and regularly "done" all the sights—even danced upon the great tun of the castle.

"Now, Minerva, are you ready for more genial

skies? and, if so, when can your arrangements be made?" asked my husband.

"One day will do all I need. Suppose we go on horseback?"

"Certainly, my dear, we will do so; and, as we need not reach Rome till spring, it will be a very satisfactory mode of passing the winter."

After which, I concluded a faster style of travel would be better, and consented to cars and steamers. Our horses were the most troublesome part of our "impedimenta," but even this Roland arranged, so that we soon said "good-by" to our friends, promising that the mountain of All Saints should ever be one of our homes. To Hilda and her father we gave our last evening.

"I want you both to remain unchanged till we come again," I said.

"Every day leaves its mark upon one as old as I, dear lady," replied the white-haired musician. "When my hand loses its power to express my thoughts, I have no wish to linger. I am willing to stay here while I can be learning new themes, while my harp needs tuning; but, dear lady, after that, I wish to join the orchestral band whose hands and voices know no weariness, and their song no ending."

"We will never see him again," said my husband, as we went out. "He is standing on the threshold."

"And Hilda?"

“Mamma and Victor will soon be here. When Hilda is an orphan, she may come to us.”

But I had not been so long with Hilda without learning this was more than doubtful. She had numberless plans for enlarging and perfecting her work, and this she held to be duty.

“It is impossible ever to judge what women will do, by what women have done,” sententiously remarked my husband.

“If your opinions are so decided at twenty-one, what will they be at forty?” I asked.

“Changed, Milly, doubtless; but seriously, my darling, I can only act according to my present faith and enlightenment. Are not our wisest men in the world of science continually obliged to correct their superstructures from the yielding of the foundations? The old tower of Pisa is just like science; it was half built before it began to lean; then the architect tried to correct the difficulty; he lengthened the pillars on one side, and shortened them on the other. And so it rose toward the sky.”

“Was his alteration successful?”

“No, Milly; you know it is ‘the leaning tower’ yet. He built a tower, certainly; but if his object were to build an erect tower, he should have begun again on sure foundations. Such is the effect of its want of perpendicularity, that it affects the mind; and

it is considered unsafe for any one to ascend it alone. Several have leaped from it already."

"And are they victims to theoretical science?" I asked, in pursuance of his thought.

"I hardly intended to carry it so far; but I may say 'yes.' Many are mentally lost, in their efforts to reconcile the conclusions of false premises. The researches of one man of science are forever correcting those of his predecessors. I long for the time of sure foundations and perfect buildings."

"Do you remember, dear Roland, when I was unsatisfied with our religion?"

"Yes, Milly; it was not long ago."

"It was not the foundation that was at fault, I have found out, but the flimsy buildings."

"Other foundation can no man lay," he repeated, "than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus; but on this can be built 'in gold, in silver, in precious stones; in wood, hay, stubble;' then a time, when it will be tried 'of what sort it is.'"

"And now I long to build only what will be enduring," I said.

"With the help of the great Master-builder you will succeed, dear wife."

Thus he helped and encouraged me, and life was made up of a full reception of what was beautiful, with a daily reference to Him who gave us all so richly to enjoy.

Among the enjoyments of that eventful year, I may number our journey to Italy. We were young, full of life and spirits, unconscious of fatigue, regardless of weather; and of the other *désagrèments* of travel we both made a perpetual joke. One day our nicely covered trunks were brought to the hotel in a coal cart; their condition was beyond description. I was looking from an upper window down into the court, and saw Roland's face of utter dismay, and heard his rather energetic calls for a brush. In a moment he was in ecstasies of amusement over the phlegmatic German, who patted him on the back, with an admonishing "Keep cold, young man; keep cold." All minor troubles came to him with their comical side uppermost. Happy days to recall; each one with a record of the faithful care that in years of married life has known no end.

It is needless to give particulars of each day's approach to Rome. The journey is a familiar one to our tourists, all in a measure experiencing the same emotions as they near the "Lone Mother of Dead Empires,"—the empress queen whom St. John describes as "that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth."

I remember feeling as a friend of mine told me she felt, when, as a child, she first discovered Jerusalem on the map—that Jerusalem should have a local habitation amazed her as if a star had fallen at her feet.

So I felt towards Rome. For once, Roland did not fully sympathize with me, but he had passed his childhood there, and literal fragments of past glory were his playthings and his household gods; he could not reverence, as I did, the very walls and gates. I soon learned to be familiar with all the mile-stones of the centuries, my first awe changing to a no less reverential interest in the "marble wilderness," of "temples, baths and halls."

Modern in comparison, yet ancient to an American, was the old palazzo where Roland and Victor lived their child life, and where many happy years of mine have passed.

I wish I could make a mental photograph of it, for my readers, but I can only give its outward form; I cannot put the life in its carved and beautiful pillars and *loggie*, in its stairways and garden, that we came to know as expressions of the minds of their architects. A visitor in Rome is shown a palace—a guide will tell its history from its foundation to its roof, but until one can give the sacred name of "home" to the grand pile of stones, they hold but a half meaning.

Now, dear reader, even if you do not know Rome, go with me to a dark and narrow street. I will not locate it exactly, for it will well repay search. On the east side, a heavy, prison-like wall rises three stories in height. Dark and massive stones were used in its building, and the great thickness of the wall is seen in

the sides of the small square windows which pierce it on the basement floor, and which are protected with iron gratings. On the second story, the windows are long and wide, each with a balcony, but these are rarely opened, for the outlook on the street is intensely dreary. The windows of the third story are smaller, but also balconied. There is no entrance door, but on the north-west corner a heavy gate admits both foot-passengers and carriages. The ringing of the bell beside it, is followed by the unlatching of the gate, when the servant, whose duty is to attend, meets on the inside whoever enters. A paved carriage road continues through to the garden, entering the carriage-house. As the gate opens, the first beautiful object is the great marble stairway, built from Morelli's designs. It rises just on the right of the paved carriage road, dividing it from the large square court around which the palace is built. This court is paved with marble, in black and white blocks, and ornamented with a fine central fountain, by Fontana, to whose genius we also owe the beauty of the court and its corridors. These corridors, or *loggie*, are of two stories, and on three sides of the court. The fourth is occupied by the stairway, the *loggia* there taking the form of an arcade, its pillars rising on each side of the steps. Through one of its arches we enter the court. South, and on the side of the street, are servants' rooms and offices. On the east side, the *loggia* is built in three

wide arches, which rise to support the rooms above, and under them is the great flight of steps leading down to the garden. Doors of iron wire are so planned that at night this entrance can be cut off. This garden was laid out in the quaint old style, as a labyrinth of walks, vistas and surprises, until the Tiber put an effectual ending upon the vagaries of the designer. A balustrade, with vases of yucca, protects the wall at the end. Across the river, a villa and gardens bound our view.

According to my wish, Victor permitted me to see it in its neglected condition ; but soon it blossomed into marvelous beauty ; and, though the steps are still broken, the statues noseless and armless, and the balusters blackened with age, the paths and groves, the groups of shade trees and avenues of box, the fountains, the flowers—of which some always bloom—make it now, as then, a garden of delights.

The rooms in which we live are on the second story, and, according to the usual mode, are thoroughfares. This inconvenience is modified, in some degree, by private stairs, winding down in unnoticed corners, but which, when one learns their mysteries, and how to turn and turn in darkness, without being dizzy, become a great comfort. Our sleeping-rooms look towards the garden, and their windows open on balconies overlooking it. The picture galleries, the reception and music-rooms, are on the side of the street,

with glass doors opening inside on the second story *loggia*; the eating-rooms—one, for breakfast, and a long, magnificent hall for dinner—are opposite the stairway, and have windows only on the court. Our third meal is taken in the garden, or served to us informally wherever we chance to be; as it is at an hour when guests are always with us, it is one of the entertainments of the day.

The third floor is occupied with the sleeping-rooms of the women-servants, Roland's studio, and store-rooms—a part of the house answering to our attics.

This is one of our homes—Victor's inheritance in the "Eternal City." When I gave up considering its inconveniences, and learned to accept the moderate degree of privacy possible behind curtains, and when I understood how perfectly it was adapted to the climate, I found its beauty quite compensated me for what I once called "comfort;" and the restfulness and peace that its walls inclosed—shutting off, as they did, every outside disturbance—were a phase of life as nearly perfection as one can imagine.

To the treasures of old Rome, which were both guides and teachers, and to the cultured circle which gathered around us as soon as we were known to have opened the long-closed home, we owed a daily joy. Sometimes I could not conceal from myself that such life was for a favored few. The working man could only minister to it, and behold it from afar. We

could come down to him, but he could never reach up to us.

I told Roland, one day, of these thoughts. "We have not sought this, dear Milly—we have accepted it. Let us learn all we can in it ; let us enjoy all we can of it, and be ready, as 'dwellers in an inn,' to make, at any time, a change that will place us in a more active sphere of usefulness."

Roland was always living earnestly. He never wasted time in preparations for the uncertain future ; and so it was that he was ever learning, for he was never restless—the present was accepted with whatever it offered him.

We had not been three days in Rome before his studio was established ; his early morning hours devoted to it ; an Italian teacher engaged for me, and a systematic plan of seeing the city decided upon, which made the hours before our mid-day dinner rich with new interests within the walls, and our afternoons delightful with expeditions made on horseback beyond them.

Max and Black Beauty took kindly to the climate, and seemed to find great comfort in each other's society. They were always neck and neck, and became so gentle, and so accustomed to our excursions, that Philip reported : "They knows four o'clock as well as I do, and they fidgets and calls till I saddles them, and

then they most runs to the gate. I never seed know-inger creatures in my life."

Even beside Roland's potent example, I could not but fear our happiness must be of short duration.

"If it proves so, my darling, why refuse to accept it as long as it is given us?" he would answer. And I have lived to know that half of life's troubles are those that are self-made, while a large part of the other half have only their existence in anticipation.

CHAPTER XV.

LEO, AND VICTOR'S VIGIL.



MAMMA and Victor reached Heidelberg a few weeks after we left, and were at once established at the Bodenhausens. Unfortunately, the cold weather prevented the out-of-door pleasures that were so much to us; but mamma was so identified with Victor that if he were contented, she had no wish for change. They had become son and mother. To mamma, who never lived for herself, it was delightful to be necessary to some one; and Victor asserted that a mother was the completion of his existence, for which his soul had pined. We were disappointed in their not coming sooner to us, but in those days, or, indeed, in any others, I doubt whether Roland and I have *needed* any one.

The accounts of Victor's love affairs were rather discouraging. Mamma wrote about her own interest in Hilda, but that she could hardly understand her refusal to respond in any way to Victor's evident devotion; she carefully avoided being alone with him, frequently declining his assistance in her favorite work; yet evidently enjoyed his society, when a third

person was present. Victor bore it all with his customary patience, but taxed his ingenuity to make himself necessary to her. He often passed whole mornings with the old musician, to give his daughter the freedom she desired, and seemed fully repaid if the bright little head appeared now and then at the door, giving a nod of approval. Mamma was persuaded to take her work to the sunny parlor, to listen to the music drawn from organ, harp or viol, and when she was there Hilda's visits were more frequent. Sometimes her floury hands would tell her occupation; sometimes the all-protecting apron proved that she had even stolen a few minutes from the beloved animals. Mamma was fascinated with it all. She wrote:

“I delight in Hilda. I love to see a purpose in a life; and, though I wish she had chosen some other occupation, I cannot fail to honor her in this, and to admire her in everything.

“Our musical mornings are delightful; Hilda comes when she can, and the *shimmer* of joy that Victor most unconsciously shows at her approach is beautiful to me. We have begun to pass the evenings together, also. Some of Victor's friends come, and little Gretchen. We have songs of all kinds. Even I join in the choruses, and sometimes make one in a quartette, all contributing according to our gifts.

“The informal way in which these Germans enjoy their music is an immense improvement on our musical

parties ; nothing can be finer than what is produced under the direction of 'the master;' and it is delicious to know, too, that each one is an enthusiast. Then, Milly, the dear old man always says, at the close of the evening : 'Now, my children, we will offer our song of praise.' Then we all stand and sing a hymn, with the doxology."

I knew mamma would enjoy such evenings as she described, and which were among our pleasant memories. We delighted to read her descriptions of them ; but, to get the whole story, we needed Victor's side. He told us of all that mamma was to him, and how Hilda had also adopted her as her mother, carrying all her cares and perplexities to this all-sympathizing heart ; and how the old man, too, found his daily life incomplete without the "gnadige Frau Hartley."

Soon Hilda confided to mamma that she never intended to marry, and, in the event of her father's death, would invest all her money in building proper accommodations for sick and suffering animals. "I cannot do much, dear Mrs. Hartley," she said ; "but the little I have already done has had a good influence in their general treatment. Few men are naturally cruel ; animals suffer most from the inconsideration of their masters. I induce them to think ; and this is of as much use as the present relief to the creatures. Then, the very opposition with which I meet," she added, with a blush, "helps it on, because it becomes

a subject of conversation ; and many come to believe in the truth of my theories, while they condemn my practice of them."

"All this," wrote mamma, "made me feel more like helping Hilda than opposing her ; and I can fancy your amusement, Milly, at my awkward attempts at assistance."

After a month of this quiet, and yet happy life, sad days came to the little party. A peculiarly delightful evening had been passed, the music had seemed as if one soul spoke to another, and "the master" was never more gratified. As each guest said "good night," he expressed his thanks for their performance, in his own beautiful way, not as giving him personal pleasure, but as offering a less imperfect tribute than usual to Him to whom harmony was a necessity. "If not," he said, turning to mamma, "why the need of reconciliation, of atonement? He would resolve all discords, and bring all unto himself, and He be all in all."

There was such an ineffable peace on his countenance, that Victor, Hilda and mamma stood transfixed, while the old saint once more drew from his harp almost unearthly sounds of beauty ; and then—a paleness overspread his countenance, his right arm fell from the instrument, sweeping the strings with a wail of woe that those who heard it never forgot. He was stricken with paralysis !

Mamma did not leave Hilda until all was over. For three weeks they watched this living death. Each day, after all was done that could give him ease, they sang to him, and, from the light that beamed from the soft gray eyes, they knew he heard them, but he could give no other sign. Victor was to his old master as the "son of his right hand," helpful, loving, tender; always ready to lift him into an easier position, or to perform any other office; not burdening Hilda with obligations, but acting from his great heart of love. Ere long, the end came. One morning, "the master" closed his eyes, and the last breath was drawn. They were watching, hardly believing all was over, when an expression of full content came over his face, that seemed a revelation. Then Victor, in a low voice, said: "He beholds the King in his beauty, and another white-robed harpist stands in the heavenly choir."

"This so lifted us from sorrow," wrote mamma, "that grief seemed desecration. Hilda's look at Victor was reverential, and then she took his hand and mine. 'Thank you, dear mother and dear brother,' she said."

Mamma's loving heart permitted no desolation to fall upon the orphan girl. No daughter could have had more tender care.

Not long after this she asked Victor: "When are

you going to persuade Hilda to be one of us? Surely now—”

“Surely, nothing, dearest mother. I have asked Hilda to be my wife and she has refused.”

“Victor! this cannot be possible,” exclaimed mamma.

“She was as firm as a rock,” he said. “I do not think Hilda will ever yield.”

Mamma was by no means giving to interfering, so, asking no more questions, she said: “Perhaps we had better join Mildred and Roland for a while—you can at any time return here.”

“I will do whatever you wish, dear mother; only let me be with you. I have kept you too long from Mildred; I cannot ask more of you. Just tell me what day you wish to go, and I will be ready.”

“Do not hesitate to tell me just what you would like me to do,” she replied. “Mildred has full measure of joy. I am quite at liberty to be with you, my dear, dear son.”

“Let us remain longer then, and watch over Hilda; she is strangely friendless, and so little to live on, in comparison with us, that I wonder how she lives at all. You can best judge how I can help her; it is so hard for me to have this useless money and be unable to give to her.”

Giving to her was a difficult problem, and Victor strove vainly to solve it. He had some comfort in

purchasing, through a friend, some rare music and musical instruments, which Hilda offered for sale, and for which he gave the highest price that was possible without exciting her surprise. She was too much occupied to consider the matter, looking at each dollar as a stone in her new building.

Mamma found another way to help—that was by occupying one of her little rooms. She made it very plain to Hilda that it would be a great convenience to her, because she disliked going to the hotel during the cold weather for dinner, as we had always done, and she would much like to have exactly what was prepared for herself. On learning of all this, Roland and I felt that Hilda's strong castle was so beleaguered that it certainly would soon surrender, but an incident, of which we received a full description, destroyed our hopes again.

One day, mamma was watching the thick-falling snow, when a little boy tapped at the window; she opened it, and, amid tears and very ungrammatical German, learned that Fräulein Hilda was wanted at once, to tell his father—the butcher—whether Leo, their great dog, must be shot.

Mamma called Hilda, who brought in the boy, and, by questions, found that an infuriated heifer had horned poor Leo, who was very fierce and uncompromising in the performance of his duty. The heifer most unreasonably objected to the preparations for her

slaughter, and Leo attempted to reduce her to order by biting her heels. This was too much for the heifer, who broke all bonds, and, thrusting both horns into Leo's side, tore him frightfully.

While the boy was telling this, Hilda put on her heavy dress and shoes, and, with a basket of bandages and ointments, prepared herself to go. At this moment Victor opened the door, and was told the demand.

He paused a moment, and then exclaimed: "Leo is the fiercest dog in town; he will let no one approach him. I entreat you, Hilda—for my sake, if you do not care for your own—do not go! He must be shot. Do not expose yourself to his agony of ferocity."

Mamma watched anxiously, hoping Hilda would yield. An expression of pain clouded her brow, but there was no hesitation in her words:

"I must go, Victor. Leo will do me no harm."

At this, Victor rushed off. No one suspected his intentions; he ran to his room for his pistol; then, by a short cut, reached the slaughter-house, hastily explained to the butcher that he knew Fräulein Hilda was coming, as he had seen her with his little boy, that he had heard of her power over animals, and wanted to be concealed where he could see how she treated Leo, without her suspecting his presence. The butcher placed him in a stall, where, through a knot-hole in the wood, he could see the dog. Victor

was a capital shot, and Leo's moments would have been few, if he had turned on Hilda. Thus he prepared to protect this most willful lady of his love.

Leo was an alarming patient. His character for ferocity was well known. He was lying just where the heifer had thrown him. The horns had entered his side, but his weight was too great ; he had hardly been lifted when the skin and flesh gave way, and the poor dog, torn and mangled, fell to the floor. The raging beast was secured and killed, and Leo, unable to rise, lay for hours in one position. His howls were so terrific that no one dare approach him, except his master. He succeeded in muzzling him, after which, the dog, in his agony, could only beat his head against the boards, for neither howl nor moan could pass the cruel strap that held his jaws firmly closed. His master was about to shoot him, when the little boy, with whom he sometimes played, begged permission to go for "the kind Fräulein who takes care of animals."

Victor was speculating on Leo's strange motions and the tossing of his head, when Hilda entered, apparently quite regardless of the surroundings.

"Poor Leo," said she, sitting down on some straw beside him, and putting her hand on his head, "you have had a hard time. Bring me some water, Fritz ; not a bucket, bring a pan ; he cannot raise himself to drink from a bucket, you know," she said, addressing the butcher, without the slightest tone of reproach.

“Animals suffer greatly from thirst when they are wounded. Leo cannot go for water now ; he is tossing his head about in great pain. You will not let him tell you about it,” and she smiled as she touched the muzzle. “His only way is to howl. I don’t wonder you did not like it.” All this time her hand was on his head.

“I am afraid for you to be near him when I loosen the muzzle, Fräulein,” said his master.

“I will loosen it,” replied Hilda. “When he sees the water, he will not have time to think of me. Moreover, he cannot spring.”

“He can snap,” returned his master.

“Leo is too high-bred for that,” said Hilda, pleasantly, looking straight into his protruding and blood-shot eyes. “Now, Leo, you shall have a drink.”

A faint wag of his tail looked encouraging, as she began to unfasten the muzzle ; but a click of a pistol attracted the butcher’s attention, and he moved some distance out of the way, expecting, as he afterwards said, to see Leo fasten on Hilda’s hand, and then fall dead on the spot !

There was some trouble in unbuckling the strap ; it evidently hurt the dog to move it. “I am afraid his tongue is between his teeth,” said Hilda, succeeding, at last, and holding the water so that he could reach it.

She was right ; Leo had no thought but the water.

He plunged his mouth into it, drinking madly, with the blood coming from the tongue, which, as Hilda feared, had been caught and hurt when his mouth was strapped.

With difficulty she retained her unruffled demeanor. Such carelessness was intolerable to her; but, as she told mamma, she had no authority to sustain her, and could only hope to influence by moral power.

“Leo’s head is burning with fever. Bring me fresh water; put a little snow in it. Fritz, give me a sponge. I will try to get some cool water to penetrate this heavy fur cap of his;” and, with her eye still on his, and her gentle voice soothing him, she bathed the hot head, his mouth, and around his ears, he trying to lap her hand, whenever he could reach it.

The restless tossing of the head soon ceased. Leo was relieved of some of his suffering, and Victor’s pistol was lowered.

“Now, Leo, you must let me see where you are hurt. Kiss my hand again, old fellow, so that I may be sure we are good friends; there, that will do; I believe in you. Now, I am going to cut the hair away from the wound before I wash it. See, Leo, my scissors;” and she cut a little from his neck, to show him what she was going to do.

Victor was breathless at this new experiment. the butcher was fairly absorbed with this extraordi-

nary way of "talking to beasts as if they were children ; and I declare Leo knew everything she said," he told his good Frau when he went home that night. One of the men offered to cut the hair for her, if she would watch Leo.

"Be very careful not to cut the skin anywhere," said Hilda ; "if he once gets frightened, he will be harder to manage."

Leo's eyes glared as the man took the scissors, but with the pressure of the hand on his head, evidently tried to trust his new friend. A sudden howl brought Victor's pistol to the front again, but there was no danger to Hilda.

"There," said she, "let me do it ; I am more used to handling scissors than you. Thank you ; now, if it were a knife, you would have the advantage of me." And thus, in her kindly fashion, she re-took her woman's weapon, and, paling a little before the terrible wound, began to remove the hair. All the time she talked, and Leo listened.

"Fritz, you can hold a wet sponge on his head. Tell him he is a good dog—animals love encouragement. Now, Leo, I must cut this. If you wish to give a lock of your hair to any one, old fellow, you can do so. Now, it is nicely trimmed. I did not want to get any more hair in the wound. Will you let me see the horns that did this mischief?" she asked.

The man found them, and the scent brought a deep growl.

"I only want to see if they are broken, Leo. If there is no piece in the wound, you and I will have less trouble. Not broken, I am glad to see. Now, I can wash without probing. Give me the sponge, Fritz, and move back a little ; he might snap his teeth together if it hurts him. Kiss my hand again, Leo ; we are good friends yet, are we not ?"

Victor was in agony, and longing to put an end to his own misery by ending Leo's, but his probation was not over.

Leo bore the washing, the pouring of a healing ointment on his wounds, with that extraordinary patience that all who have operated on dogs have witnessed. Low moans were all the sounds he made.

"Do you think he can be saved, Fräulein ?" asked his master. "I think a great deal of Leo."

"If he can be brought to my house I will try to cure him," she replied. "He will need constant care for a day or two—then there will be no trouble ; he is a strong, healthy dog ; if he can be kept quiet the wound will heal."

"I do not like you to do this for me," said the butcher.

"I will do it for Leo, then," she answered, smiling ; "and now, have you a sled ? The snow will be deep enough soon. Let Leo lie quietly ; he is asleep now. I will come down when it is dark, and

the town quiet ; we can move him better then ; bring him fresh water before I go, Fritz, and put it close beside him ; that is right ; his head is not nearly so hot. I am very glad you sent for me. Good afternoon." And simply, and as if she had done nothing uncommon, Hilda went her way.

Victor came out of his hiding-place. "A good woman is a work of God," said the butcher. "She seemed to me to have a power I fancy old Mother Eve might have had. Ah, Herr Hartley, women can do more than we strong men, sometimes."

"Fräulein Hilda works by love," replied Victor ; "thank you for letting me see her ; I have often heard about it, and have seen her influence over her animals at her hospital for them, but I certainly had little faith in her taming of Leo."

"I see you had not," returned the man, touching the pistol significantly. "There was one time when I thought I'd heard the last sound from Leo."

"I am glad I had no need to shoot the poor creature ; he sleeps as if he were utterly exhausted, poor fellow." But Victor's "poor fellow" was received by a growl, without Leo's taking the trouble to open his eyes, and Victor took his leave in hot haste. He went to the hotel, which Hilda would be obliged to pass on her return ; there he waited with what patience he could command. He says he presumes the darkness came at the proper time, according to the almanac,

but he then thought it was three hours late. With it came Hilda. "May I help you?" he asked, reaching the door when she did. "No, thank you," she replied, with some coolness; "I do not need any one but the men." At this Victor remained at the door, and watched her simple plan of placing the dog on the sled, her hand on his head all the while. Two boards were put under him, and four strong men raised him on the sled. "Leave the boards," she said; "there is enough snow to avoid jolting. I will keep him quiet."

With her hand upon him and her voice soothing him, they dragged him out. She took no notice of Victor, and the sled went off easily on the snow.

Leo gave himself up utterly to this new power, even trying to aid, when, on reaching the place prepared for him in Hilda's barn, the boards had to be taken from under him.

The question of danger was settled. The men left the dog, whom they all feared, perfectly quiet and at rest.

Victor had followed. "Do not be vexed with me," she said to him. "When I am engaged in outside work I am in no need of protection; it does me harm, and not good. Thank you, for meaning to be kind."

Victor went home, where mamma was waiting him. He told her the whole story. "And this," he added, "Hilda prefers to me and my love. It is very wonderful, and very good; but when I saw the woman—who, if there is power in love, shall yet be

my wife—kneeling on the floor of the slaughter-house, surrounded by sights which she need never know have an existence, ministering to a wounded dog—it was unbearable! I wonder I did not shoot myself, and have done with this life! How am I to endure it? What is to be the end? Will her strange fancy grow by what it feeds on, or will she some time give it up?”

“Hilda will relinquish her own work only to those who will carry it on; the hope which I see is, that you may persuade her to associate others with her, to whom she may delegate it. Lena is interested, but has not sufficient courage. Some one of strong character must be found.”

Victor looked gloomily on the prospect.

“I must return now,” said mamma; “Hilda intends sleeping on the sofa to-night, so that she can go out to Leo, if he is restless; she will sleep in her thick dress, to be ready. Walk back with me, Victor; it is early. Perhaps she will play on the zither for us. I want its quiet music, or yours, on the organ.”

“All my instruments are out of tune,” said Victor.

But Hilda's were not. Her rough dress was already temporarily replaced by some softer fabric. Her sweet smile welcomed them to a late tea, after which her zither and her voice were at the service of her friends, until mamma told Victor he should not stay another moment. He hastened off, he said, that the old Grossmutter might hear him in his room before midnight.

She did hear him ; and then she heard him go out again into the snow, and wondered after the boy who was so dear to them all.

If she had seen him, her heart would have ached ; for all night he stood guard over Leo. He knew the dog was unsafe ; he thought Hilda was not aware how his suffering might increase if the wounds refused to heal, and that at any moment he might think she was the cause. He shuddered at the possibilities. The dog was accustomed to sleep out of doors ; so that Hilda thought the old barn, while it afforded protection, was better than a closer place. It suited Victor, because between the boards he could watch, and, if necessary, shoot. Mamma would have never forgiven herself, if she had known to what her revelation of Hilda's intentions had led the son of her adoption.

Four times the young surgeon went out into the night to see her patient. He greeted her warmly—once only, growled when she poured her ointment into the wound ; tried vainly to move, for it was hard for him to lie so long in one position ; then, with a half howl, laid down his head again. All the time she was there, Victor watched, able, even in his anxiety, to notice the graceful poise of the head and the earnest eyes. On her last visit, Hilda sang to Leo. For some reason, known to herself, the song she considered best suited to soothe his sorrows was Abt's "*Ich denke Dein.*" After singing every verse, she said : "If

you would like a light, Leo, I will leave you my lantern. There, that is more cheerful. Now, I will not come back till morning."

Softly humming to herself, she went into the house, bolting the door for the first time that night. There was a sweet peace over her soul, though she did not know her lover watched.

Victor waited till the light in her window was extinguished ; then, stiff and cold, walked homewards. The fire was out in the porcelain stove, that, inserted in the division wall between his bed-room and sitting-room, heated both. He was chilled through. Quite unaccustomed in his vigorous health to regard cold or heat, he went to bed, but, for the first time in his life, drew over him the German feather covering, wondering why it was so impossible to gain any heat from it. In the morning, he did not rise with his accustomed strength, and coughed a little.

"It certainly is the coldest day I ever felt in Heidelberg," he said, looking at his thermometer, which hung outside of the window. "No, it is not, after all ; Mona has forgotten the fire." But he quickly drew his hand back from the heated surface when he laid it on the stove. Unable to reconcile his sensations with the actual state of the temperature, he put on an extra garment, and, going into the other room, found that it was hot coffee he had needed. "I

have a grand appetite to-day, Mona," he said; "that is my fourth cup."

"But you have eaten nothing, Herr Victor," remonstrated Mona.

"Coffee is meat and drink," he returned, as he went out.

Mamma was still lingering over her breakfast, when he bade her "guten Morgen."

"Where is Hilda?" he asked.

"She is encouraging Leo; he was determined to get up to-day, and Hilda is telling him that it is impossible. She talks to him in the most confidential way. I went to see him this morning; he is a terrible sight. Una and her lion are nothing to Hilda and hers." They laughed about it until Victor began to cough. "My dear boy, what are you coughing for?" asked mamma.

"Nothing—there is something in my throat; a cough is nothing; but this is rather a nuisance, because a sort of stitch in my chest prevents my giving a regular manly cough."

Presently Hilda came to the door. "Come and see Leo, Victor; I think he is doing nicely; he can bear more decided treatment to-day," and Hilda explained what was necessary about a wound to insure the healing from below, first. Leo received this consulting physician with composure, though Victor said he trusted more to his inability to move than to his good nature, a remark which was properly reprovèd by the lion tamer.

"I am afraid he is too warm," said she; "such a wound cannot have much heat."

"Greenland is summer to it," said Victor; "it is the coldest day I ever felt."

"A good walk would change your opinion," returned Hilda, dodging the melting snow that was pouring from the roof of the barn.

"How oddly you cough, Victor," she said suddenly, "as if it hurt you to take a long breath."

"It does," he returned, laughing, "but that is nothing. I have breathed without thought for so many years it is only justice for me to consider for once how I do so."

Soon after this he returned home, intending to go to one of the lectures, as was his custom at eleven o'clock. For some reason he concluded to omit his lecture, and lie down on the sofa with a book. "Schleiermacher must compensate me for Paulus today," he said; but instead of reading, went off into a reverie about the decrease of Rationalism in Germany. "God's truth alone can feed the soul," he said dreamily, but striving to think. "Man needs God—a Being from above—a mere exemplar is not enough—Luther proved that a man needs the down-pouring of divine life. It is of no use for the rationalists to keep up the controversy. Science is too much for them—it is harmonizing with Scripture—" and then Victor was asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

HILDA MARRIES A STABLE PIGEON!



ATE in the afternoon mamma went out to walk. She stopped at the Bodenhausen's first, and, among other topics of mutual interest, Hilda was spoken of. Both ladies praised her highly, but one thought she need not devote her whole life to animals, and the other had a mental reservation in regard to the young girl, which she did not reveal. The Grossmutter thought if there were more like her in the world, we might begin to look for the millennium. This, mamma did not controvert, as she also thought Hilda more suited to a world where love and marriage were of less importance than here ; but it was not to her taste to discuss any one, so she changed the subject, by leaving a message for Victor, when Gretchen said he was up-stairs, at which mamma concluded to give the message herself. She found him asleep, looking ill and feverish, and while hesitating to waken him, he opened his eyes, saying, in a sleepy tone :

“ It is of no use ; science and Scripture both come from the same divine mind. They must harmonize. You see, mother, it is useless for you to assert the op-

posite. This controversy that you maintain against simple religious truth must cease."

Mamma was amazed. "Why, Victor, what *do* you mean?"

"It is useless, worse than useless," he continued. "Man is a very distorted image of God. We need more than the most perfect man for our example. Christ alone, as man, will not satisfy a *soul*. I want *God*."

"My dear boy—" And then the truth flashed upon his listener; for he tried to cough, but the pain in his chest prevented. He was ill and delirious. She put her hand on his hot head; she felt his pulse.

"We know not," he continued, "whether our characteristics are not a blasphemy when applied to God. Is man's mercy the same as God's mercy? Who can tell? I wish you would agree with me, mother; it is so lonely to struggle in this way, and Hilda does not care."

Mamma called to Mona, who fortunately passed the door: "Send for a physician at once. Herr Victor is ill."

Mona ran down, and went for the physician. Gretchen and her mother came up.

"I cannot tell you all about it to-day," said Victor. "Leo disturbed the lecture. He is only a lower nature. Perhaps his characteristics are the same as ours. I'm sure I do not know. If there is to be sacrifice of

truth, I do not want union ; it can only exist in perfect truth. Schleiermacher was unwise about the Old Testament. Mother, why does Hilda argue against it ? If I could only get her attention long enough, I would show her that Moses was a divine man, yet utterly subservient to God."

At this exordium Gretchen burst into tears, and her mother sent her from the room, whereupon she tried to repeat Victor's ravings to the Grossmutter, greatly bewildering the old lady. Fortunately, the physician was soon in attendance. He pronounced Victor's illness to be pneumonia, with high fever, and insisted on sending a nurse who was familiar with the disease.

"I will not conceal from you, Frau Hartley, that he is extremely ill. I must have a nurse who fully understands me. Pardon me ; I mean, she must work with me—be as my left hand is to my right—and have no thought or care but my patient."

This was both kind and reasonable. Mamma was too wise to resist, although she was ready to devote her very life to Victor. She yielded her care to the bright, intelligent woman who came at the physician's bidding.

"Please do not stay to-night," said Greta, the nurse. "I do not want to think of any one but Herr Victor."

"Will you do better without me ?" asked mamma.

“Much better ; come to-morrow,” was the answer, in a low tone. “Do not whisper,” she said ; “always speak low, but distinctly, so that if the patient hears the sound, he can also hear the words.” This bit of simple common sense, so seldom acted upon in a sick room, gave mamma such confidence in Greta that she left Victor in her hands without further parley.

Hilda was waiting at the window. “You are late, dear friend,” she said ; “the kettle has boiled twice, the tea will be spoiled. What is the matter ?” as no answering smile acknowledged her anxiety about the tea.

“Did you notice Victor’s cough to-day—how it seemed to distress him ? He has pneumonia,” replied mamma.

“Not severely, I know, or you would not be here,” answered Hilda.

“Yes, Hilda, he is very ill. I am here because Greta insisted on being left alone with him. To-morrow I will establish myself in the room next to his. I feel now that I shall have no peace unless I can know every change. I am sorry to leave you, dear, but you know what Victor is to me. Have you any idea how he took this cold ?”

“I cannot imagine ; he is so strong, I cannot fancy him ill. In the ten years I have known him he has always been well,” and Hilda burst into tears.

Mamma, with all her goodness, was just a little glad that Hilda should suffer ; her ability to be happy without Victor being her one point of imperfection.

“ You must come to me to hear about him, whenever you can. I shall do everything that Greta will permit. Dr. Wodenthal was so decided about her taking care of him, that I felt obliged to submit. I promised to leave him entirely to her care till to-morrow.”

There was no music that night. Hilda performed her various duties with the stillness of an apparition, and my mother made her preparations to remove to the old quarters.

The next afternoon, Hilda went to mamma to inquire. Victor had still turns of delirium ; the fever was unsubdued, and, as she entered the room next to his, she heard her name.

“ If Hilda would only listen,” he said, “ I could easily prove it to her. Animal nature is lower than ours. Love from an animal cannot be entirely satisfying. One must partake of the divine nature to be quite at rest. We are partakers of divinity. Mother, Hilda could represent Lutheranism ; I, the evangelical church party. Their union would do much toward the pacification of religious interests. But she has no time to listen. Leo devours everything. Do you think she will tame him ? He is like the lion of An-

drocles. Mother, why does Hilda have the room so hot?"

Poor Hilda! She threw herself on her face on my mother's bed, and struggled that her sobs should not be heard. When mamma returned to her room, she found her there, and, putting her arm around the girl, whispered, "He is no worse, Hilda; he talks very quietly. He was evidently reading on these subjects when he fell asleep yesterday. He had a volume of Schleiermacher in his hand, and I know his thoughts have been much interested in the union of church interests. Everything has become entangled in his mind. What is he saying now?" They both listened, but could make nothing of it.

"I suppose Leo could not see to read; she is very thoughtful; why does she not give me a light for my darkness?" Then he began to sing, and in a low, weak voice, they heard: "*Ich denke Dein—*"

Greta closed the door; her years of faithful nursing had taught her that a patient with senses quickened by fever is conscious of the presence of those whom he does not see, and the frequent repetition of the name Hilda roused the suspicion of the good nurse that the girl was not far off.

Between mamma and Hilda there was silence. Presently she said: "Please come home with me a little while. I must tell you something."

My mother put on her wraps, and went with her.

On the way, few words were spoken; when they reached the gate, she took mamma to the barn; then, told her that on the morning after she had watched Leo so carefully, she found footprints on the snow, as if some one had been walking around the barn. She did not speak of it, fearing to excite alarm of burglars. "From this spot," she said, indicating a place at the back of the old building, "between these boards one can see the interior perfectly. How could Victor have known that I left a lantern for Leo, and that I sang '*Ich denke Dein*,' if he had not been here? He must have feared that Leo would bite me. I remember I could not account for the dog's short barks of warning—but, on the other hand, how did he know I would go to the dog in the night?"

"It is all plain now," said mamma, "and I alone am to blame. I told Victor you were going to watch Leo, and I do not doubt that he watched, also, all night, and here he took cold. Oh, Hilda, how can I forgive myself?"

But Hilda was remarkable for common sense. "Neither you nor I were to blame, dear Frau Hartley. I simply performed my duty; you did no wrong in telling of it. Victor was needlessly careful. He ought not to have watched me. I am in no danger from animals. He ought to believe in me."

Hilda seemed partly vexed that she had been under such espionage, and, under the help of her indignation,

she very composedly prepared the tea, and poor mamma, feeling quite useless, tried to gain some comfort from the cheering cup. After that evening, there were no more hours with even a pretense of composure. There was but one thought, and that was fear for Victor's life. If either mamma or Hilda went near him, his ravings increased, and his pathetic entreaties to the young girl to listen to him—to give him one quiet hour, to sing to him as she did to Leo—were heartbreaking. For two weeks, the struggle continued; several times the labored breathing seemed more than he could endure, and even the hopeful Greta would weep as she endeavored to relieve him.

At last, the blessing so earnestly sought by those who loved him fell upon the efforts made for his recovery. Youth and untiring care were strong adjuncts. At the end of the third week he was out of danger, and mamma permitted to sit beside him, while Hilda returned to her duties, pale, but with no other sign of what she had suffered.

Unfortunately, we added greatly to the anxiety of our Heidelberg friends by not replying to any of the letters about Victor's illness. Just before it took place, we left Rome for a tour among the points of interest south of Naples. The Irishman's curse seemed fulfilled on our letters: "May every blessing follow you, and never catch up with you." They reached Naples the day we left; thence were forwarded to

Sorrento, Salerno, Amalfi, and, finally, to Sicily. For three happy weeks they followed us, we writing constantly of our daily pleasures, with no thought of illness, or dream of a sorrow that would have overwhelmed us. On our return to Palermo, after a tour of the island, we found the whole history, fortunately ending with the convalescence. Our longing for news made us read the latest letter first, so that we were spared the anxiety from which dear mamma suffered so greatly, although we were not entirely satisfied, for Victor was left so susceptible to cold, that the physician ordered him farther south, as soon as possible. They would leave immediately, mamma wrote, traveling by short stages, stopping frequently—being guided only by Victor's strength. We hastened to return, and were only a few days in Rome before they came. They knew that we must have missed our letters, and, consequently, did not know of the illness; but they never knew the shock that the first sight of Victor gave us. But mamma said that he was better for the journey, and that his smile of delight when first Roland clasped him in his arms and kissed him, was the most hopeful thing she had seen. Tenderly was he cared for; the sunniest room was his, and, on warm days, he was carried to the garden to inhale the soft, healing air; but neither love, nor care, nor sunshine, nor fruits, nor flowers, availed. The physician said there was a want of recuperative power about

him ; that a young person generally rebounded after an illness ; it was as if he had no interest in his own recovery. This idea we would not admit for a moment, and went on hopefully with our remedies. It is not possible to imagine a lovelier nature than Victor's. He combined the gentleness and refinement of a woman with all the manliness of the noblest of men. His gratitude was most touching. We tried, in every way, to make the invalid's days cheerful, and felt ourselves rewarded by his smiles of appreciation. The subject of Hilda and her life was avoided generally. It had an element of awkwardness in it, and, besides, we all were vexed with the persistence of the girl. One day, I was struck by a wistful look on Victor's face, and, with womanly intuition, approached the subject.

“By the by, Victor, where is your dove?”

“Did we not write her fate? It was an evil omen, dear sister.”

“Tell me, perhaps I may read it differently. It will not be the first omen that could be read in two ways.”

“Listen then, fair priestess. One day I was writing, with my window open, it was the season that I learned to call ‘Indian summer,’ when it seems as if nature made one final effort to prevent the reign of winter. My dove, my Hilda, seemed delighted to breathe the delicious air, and sat contentedly—at least, I was so deceived—on the window ledge, giving those

soft coos, which I thought were love to me. Suddenly a pigeon flew beside her—one of the lower nature, Milly, such as lived at the stable. Hilda fluttered to my side and viewed the intruder from that safe distance. What he said to her, and she said to him, I cannot tell. I know they 'made eyes' at each other."

"Oh, Victor," I interrupted, laughing, "what a dreadful idea of love-making."

"Yes, Milly, but it is true, they winked, and they blinked, and *vice versa*, then the stable pigeon flew away, and little Hilda was mine own again. The next morning I was dressing, and to my surprise saw Hilda on a branch of a tree,—she always flew in and out you know,—but this time the stable pigeon was beside her, and oh, Milly dear, when I called she did not come, and—not to be too sentimental—she has gone to house-keeping in the stable pigeon-house! It was an omen of the sorrow that has come to me since."

"Not at all, you are mistaken. Hilda has joined her own true love. It is an omen of future domestic bliss."

"But not with me, dear sister. My little dove flew away with a stable pigeon," and Victor gave a ghost of a laugh.

"You say it as if it were the depth of degradation. The stable is only an accident in her life. If the pigeon house had been in the conservatory she would have

lived in luxury. It proves, too, what she is capable of, for one she loves."

"I may have to give up my home to attract my Hilda. Is that what you mean?"

"Victor, dear, I mean you to be bright and hopeful; to have patience with our Hilda. She is struggling with herself now. Patience, dear brother."

And Victor had patience—such a quiet endurance, that we were heart-broken. One damp, cold day, such a day as seems to have no inheritance in Rome, he coughed so much that we were greatly alarmed. The physician came in haste—came twice that day. He ordered fires and more clothing. A wood fire was lighted, and our largest brazier placed in Victor's room, the air of which became genial and pleasant; but the sun refused to shine, and a damp fog penetrated the sanctum. Cough, cough, cough.

Roland paced the hall in distress. "What a place to live," he exclaimed. "No one here prepares for anything but sunshine. I must propose his going farther south."

Victor seemed pleased at the idea of change. Then, turning to me, said: "Do not think I leave you, without regret, dear sister, but it is a daily pain to me to cast a shadow on your life. I hoped to have added only to your joy here, and fancied the delightful excursions that we would all take together."

Dear Victor! We told him we would rather

have him in his invalid chair than ever be separated again, but it was best for him to go. He would not consent to take Roland from me, so, with the help of couriers and servants, he and mamma were comfortably placed in a large *vettura*, and, one beautiful day in March, left us for Sorrento.

The first letters told of improvement. This continued until April. Then, he was not so well. He did not cough much, but was weaker. Roland looked at me, with a question on his brow.

“Yes, Roland, you must go. Perhaps it is too warm for him there. Try to bring him home. I would only be an additional care. Everything shall be ready for your return,” I said to him.

“Milly, my darling, pray, pray—I *cannot* spare my brother. It is best for me to go alone; for, my own precious wife, when you are with me, there are only half-hearted thoughts that I give even to Victor. If he is worse, you will come to us; if he is better, I will bring him home.”

And so it was arranged. I bade him “Good-bye” with rather a sad heart, and carried a recollection of Roland’s struggle to be cheerful, for many days.

He went by steamer to Naples, thence to Sorrento, while I was alone in the old Palazzo. The weather was uncomfortably as well as unseasonably warm, and I found, in its sultriness, an excuse for my aimless wanderings about the great empty rooms. When Ro-

land's fresh and vigorous life was present, the house was fully occupied ; without him, my lightest footfall echoed my loneliness. I tried to interest myself in pictures, frescoes and statues, but in vain. Roland's studio, with an unfinished painting of Max and Black Beauty, was more to me than the brownest of the brown treasures of the old masters. The intense heat of the third floor was all that drove me from melancholy contemplation of his work. As evening approached, I descended the marble stairway to the court, where, by the fountain, I recalled the story of the Nina and Anita who saw their young faces reflected in the crystal water. Then I wandered on to the garden, going down the broken steps, and on, till I reached my favorite seat—a marble chair from Hadrian's villa, valued greatly by the wise in such relics. There, I received old friends of the family, whom I had learned to love, and who came on visits of interest and inquiry about Victor. Others were not admitted, for I had no heart for the circle of English and Americans who sometimes joined our evening entertainments. My old fancy for playing princess seemed far away and childish, and my solitary grandeur was almost unbearable. I never remembered living alone before. Three weary days passed, then I received a letter from Hilda. Our correspondence had not been carefully kept up, because her letters excited Victor's cough so much that we made them less frequent by

leaving long intervals in our replies. We did not consider Hilda's feelings much in those days. Without putting it in words, I believe we all laid our brother's illness to the one fact of her having gone to see poor Leo.

We were unjust. Who is not, when trying to trace effect to cause? Who can tell from what our sorrows come? Who can safely say, if he had not done thus or so, the one I loved would be here to-day? I think Hilda suspected our feelings about it, for I could see a slight evidence of elation in the letter, in which she wished Victor to know one good result of her care of Leo. Of this I will tell in another chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

LEO'S GRATITUDE.



HILDA'S letter gave an account of a remarkable instance of sagacity in the dog who suffered so much from our indignation, but of which she told in the simplest way, as if it were in no respect less than might be expected. She seemed to think animal nature capable of the highest exhibitions of feeling. "With neither speech nor hands, how much they tell us," she would say. I often laughed at her for her less appreciation of expressions that were shown in words. But to the story.

Leo had long been well, and returned to his fierce watchfulness over his master's property. He was perhaps more careful to keep behind creatures with horns, but in no other respect was he changed by his sufferings. He was in the habit of making frequent visits to his friend Hilda, but was never permitted to remain long, without reproof from his owner. One evening Hilda was sewing by her little table in the old music room, quite alone, when a noise on the porch attracted her attention. Always on the watch for a call from some animal, she opened the door, and found Leo; to her surprise—for she instantly recognized anything

unusual—he crept quietly in, without any of his customary demonstrations of joy, except that he kissed her hand, no loud barks or boisterous capers.

When she locked the door, he jumped on the sofa, and with his nose between his fore paws, and his ears raised, he listened.

She looked at him in surprise. First she thought he had been beaten and had come to her for protection ; but no, there was no sign of that, he was listening, and by no means with the fear that he would have shown if he had expected his master would come in search of him. Suddenly Hilda took the idea that some danger threatened her. She was no coward, and prepared to go outside and see if any one was lurking about. Leo seized her dress—she could no more have moved than if the great Sphinx had held it—then she concluded to fasten the outside shutters. During this she met with no opposition. She called Lena, and together they fastened the house, she then sent the servant to bed.

“Now Leo, what next?” she asked.

The dog stood beside her, he evidently did not wish her to sit down, or he would have gone back to the sofa.

Hilda left the lamp burning, and went up-stairs to her room. Leo followed her, and lay down at her door, on the outside. She was fully convinced, now, that he had come to protect her, and that he would do

so, or sacrifice his own life. She put her arms around his neck and laid her face on his great head. "Good dog, take care of Hilda," was all she said.

She always talked in simple, plain words to the animals. "They do not understand figurative language," she once told me, as if I supposed they did.

Then she closed her door, and laid on the bed without taking off her dress. Long she listened, but finally went to sleep. It was near morning, when a movement at the door—a spring, she knew, of Leo's—roused her—a fall—and a cry of a man in agony! Then, instantly striking her light, she opened the door, and in the passage saw what she said she expected—Leo's teeth fast in the throat of one of the most revolting looking men she had ever seen. She did not hesitate.

"Leo, that is enough; let him go."

Leo looked at her. "*Let him go,*" she insisted, with her eye on the dog. "Leo, obey me!"

With one final crunch that made Hilda forever safe from his victim, he slowly unfastened his teeth, and, with a growl like muttering thunder, stood watching.

Hilda kneeled beside the horrible looking wretch. There was no hope for him; the jugular vein was pierced, and the life-blood was pouring out.

"I saw that beast to-day," groaned the man. "I wish I had killed him."

"He has saved me," said Hilda, striving to staunch the blood.

"Well, yes ; I should say so." The man half laughed—a horrid sound.

Lena came out then. She, too, was wakened by the noise, and a fearful scream she gave.

The man rolled his eyes toward her, with a wicked leer. "I ain't as dangerous as I was," he said, not offering to move, for Leo was a perfect thunder-storm of growls.

Hilda said no more, till she completed her compress and bandages. "Now," said she, "you have but short time to live. Have you any God, any religion, any hope?"

"Are you a priest, that I should confess to you?" asked the man. "If you'd like to know, I'll turn your hair white with telling you what I am."

"I do not wish to know anything of your life, unless you desire to make restitution to some one."

"There is an old woman in America ; her name, and where she lives, is on a letter in my pocket—it is hard for me to talk ; that beast has torn my throat, confound him !—send it to her ; she is my mother. I don't owe her much, but she will like to know I'm dead. I am an American—a sailor."

"Is that all?" asked Hilda, wondering if this fearful creature had ever been any mother's little boy !

"Yes. What was that rubbish about religion?"

A deep growl, as he half turned to Hilda.

"Be quiet, Leo ; he will not stir. I asked you,"

she said, faint and sick with the horror of the scene, "I asked whether you had any God, any religion, any hope?"

"You seem to have hard work getting it out. I guess I've got the same God as you have; don't see as there's any difference about that. As to 'religion,' mine is to get all I can get. As to 'hope,' I had considerable when I came here. I heard you had some money laid by to put up a house for animals. I was worse off than the worst-used creature you have ever seen, and thought I'd take it. I might have helped myself to all else I could get. My 'hope' was that money."

"Your life is fast running away; have you any hope for another one?"

"Anything to pay the passage 'cross the ferry, ay? Can't say as I have. Confound that beast, can't he stop growling?"

"Hush!" said Hilda, for his talk was plentifully strengthened by oaths. "Listen to me; you have short time. The blackest sins can be forgiven by Jesus Christ. He died on the Cross for such as you. He will save you. Believe that he will. I tell you it *is* true. You must repent of your sins. Say—Lord Jesus, forgive me." And, with death standing over him, the man, with a faint voice, said:

"Lord Jesus! forgive me."

"He will," cried Hilda. "Trust Him—He will for-

give even you. Believe—Trust—” she went on more and more earnestly, as the life ebbed away.

“Is—there—no place where I—can stop—to get the—black off? To wash?”

“Jesus will wash, will cleanse. Say, ‘Lord Jesus, wash me white——’”

Hilda bent down lower to hear the words, he slowly repeating them. Leo growled louder as she leaned towards the man, whose red and bloated face was fast paling under the loss of blood.

“Hush, Leo, for Heaven’s sake be quiet. I cannot hear.”

“Starboard your helm, hard a starboard—safe—it’s past—port in sight——” and the man, blackened with the smoke from the pit, went out upon the open sea.

What shall we say? Hilda turned to Lena, with the words, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.”

A loud knocking at the door startled them.

“Go down, Lena, and see who is there,” said her mistress.

“Oh!” she screamed. “I can’t get down, unless I step over that dreadful man. Oh! oh! What shall I do?”

The staircase came up to Hilda’s door, and then there was a narrow passage into which the other rooms opened, a railing protecting it from the stairs.

The man had been thrown by the dog exactly across this passage, he had never moved. The only hope of an hour's respite was perfect stillness, besides the danger from Leo, who never took his eyes from him, apparently determined to have his life.

"Go to the front window. I am afraid to leave him a moment with Leo."

Lena, half dead with fright, put her white face outside—the dog's master was on the porch.

"It's early to disturb you," he said; "but I want Leo, there's been a bad-looking fellow round. Is the dog here?"

"The bad-looking fellow, I think, is lying dead at Fräulein Hilda's door; and Leo has killed him. I can't get down to let you in—"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the man; "Leo must have tracked him here. I was going to punish him—"

"You'll let him off, when you see what he has saved us from," said Lena, dryly.

"How can I get in?"

"You must find the place where the robber got in," suggested Lena, growing braver now that help was near.

He went around the house; a kitchen shutter was lifted off its hinges. He was rather ponderous for gymnastics; but, with the help of an old chair that stood outside, he clambered in the window, and stumbling in the darkness—for the lamp was out and every-

thing was closed in the house—came around to the front.

“Open the door,” called Hilda, from her post beside the dying man.

He fumbled over the bolts, but at last the fresh morning air and the on-coming daylight entered together.

A rather savage ejaculation startled the watching girl, whose thoughts were with the passing soul. “Oh, don't swear,” she said ; “his spirit is hovering near.”

The man moved his foot to avoid the blood that was trickling down the stairs, and, as he afterward said, was fairly dumb with horror. Leo took no notice of his master, but his growls were faint and low. A few moments, and Hilda rose. “He is quite dead,” she said.

Then, to Leo's master she told the story of Leo's care and bravery, who, to the dog's intense delight, commended him for his work.

When she had finished, she grew pale and faint with the horror of it ; her hands and dress were stained with blood. She looked at herself in dismay.

“Go, Fräulein, get off those murderous signs ; and you and Lena leave me here. Go to Frau Bodenhausen's. I saw a man at work there ; send him to me I will attend to everything for you. You shall see no sign of this night's work when you come back.”

Poor Hilda could have done no more. She was indeed grateful for this assistance.

Lena vowed : " I'll stay up-stairs forever, so I will. I'll never step over that man—no, not if I jump out of the window !" at which decided view of the matter, the butcher, without parley, took her in his arms and carried her down-stairs, regardless of kicks and screams.

Lena was so exasperated at this performance, that, without word or look, she ran, as if her life depended on it, to the Bodenhausen's, never pausing for breath till she fell into Mona's arms, telling such an incoherent and frightful story, that when the good girl finally reduced the account to one burglar, one dead man, and one dog, she was rather disappointed.

For my part, as I read Hilda's graphic account of the scene, I became fully convinced that the best thing she ever did in her life was her care of the wounded Leo, so quickly do we change when a new light is cast upon us ! To return to the real heroine, Hilda. She made herself neat again, and without another glance at the body, went outside. She called Leo to her, gave him food and water, and many a caress. Then looked after her animals, a duty which could not be neglected. By that time assistance had come, and Hilda, refreshed by the air, left these her friends, to do all that must be done, and followed Mona's footsteps to the Bodenhausen's. The day was

passed there, in talking it over and over, with all that might have been, if everything had been different, as such things are discussed.

Presently Lena appeared, crying. "Fräulein," she said, "I am very sorry, but I'll never, never sleep in that house again unless we have some man there."

"We are much safer now than we were before," replied Hilda.

"No, Fräulein, everybody will know that we are alone now, and there is no knowing how many robbers will be after us."

"What do you propose to do?" asked the practical young girl.

"I've thought, and thought, and if you are willing, I'll get Louise and Erich to come and stay with us. I can settle the little bed-room down stairs for them. I know they'll come. Erich is a great strong fellow, and as good as he is big."

"That is a good thought, Lena. Go for them at once. Tell them to come, and I will make it all right for them."

So this matter ended by Louise and her husband being installed in Hilda's little home, and a postscript told me that Erich was to take charge of everything, while Louise was the greatest possible help with the animals, "doing as much as I ever did," said Hilda.

At this point, I began to consider the much-talked-of visit to the slaughter-house as "providential."

Hilda's protectors and friends seemed to be rising on all sides in consequence.

The letter which contained all this I judged was too exciting for Victor to receive. I, therefore, sent only the facts, being by no means astonished when the answer told me that "we can never be sufficiently thankful for Hilda's heroism on the day she went to see *poor, dear, good Leo.*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY VENTURE.



HE story of Hilda's adventure, although told to Victor with every precaution, did him great injury. A letter from Roland, a few days after mamma's acknowledgment of it, said: "He is as patient and lovely as a woman, but, Milly, he has lost his voice, and speaks only in a whisper. The doctor says it is debility, but it came after Hilda's burglar story. Victor tries so hard to give no trouble that it is difficult to find out what he wants. To-day I said, 'Vic, my boy, why don't you get well? You have no deep-seated disease—only *absence of health.*' He smiled feebly. 'That is a sort of illness; but I cannot tell why I do not recover. I believe I do not care enough about it; my mind does not help my body. I do not see much hope in life; no one needs me now. I am rather a failure. I do not exactly want to die, but neither do I care to live. Do you think you could get me home again? It is warm now, and—' then his dear voice failed entirely. We are coming, but cannot make the journey short of two weeks from the time you receive this."

Two weeks! I made a sudden resolve. I had just

time to accomplish it. With me, decision followed quickly upon thought, and action as quickly followed decision. My silver whistle—the one Roland used at Hartley Hall—called a servant. “Tell Pietro to come instantly.”

Roland’s valet, whose education was thorough, being fully instructed all the way from the care of his master’s boots to that of his bank deposits, appeared as suddenly as if he had been expecting this particular imperative summons.

“Pietro, I am going to Heidelberg ; make preparations for yourself and Marie to accompany me. Do not delay a moment. I must be here again in two weeks, when your master will return.”

“Si, Signora,” was the reply, Pietro being altogether too well-bred to express the smallest opinion on the subject. I gave directions to Marie, and to the servitors of the establishment, who, for numbers and varieties of calling were even yet confusing to me. By the time my orders were given, Pietro was standing in the court, waiting my ascent from the garden, where I had been explaining to Gennaro the effects which he was to produce, without fail, by the expiration of the two weeks, and which nearly reduced him to despair.

“But, Signora—” he began.

“Yes,” I replied, cutting him short ; “I know it will be difficult, but accomplish it in the time I

specify without any deviation from the plan." Pietro waited, the picture of solemn assent. I can only describe him as a personified "*yes.*"

"If the Signora pleases, one of the Messageries Imperiales will leave Civita Vecchia to-morrow." (It occurred to me to wonder when it would leave, if the Signora did not please.) "I have ordered post horses for the Signora's own carriage—as more suitable for the Signora than a public conveyance. If the Signora is in readiness at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Civita Vecchia can be reached by five o'clock in the afternoon. The Signora will have an opportunity to dine before the arrival of the steamer. The agent has telegraphed to Naples for a state-room for the Signora." Then, with a vacant expression in which Pietro delighted, he waited further orders.

"Thank you. See when I can reach Heidelberg, without traveling at night. I may need two days there. On my return to Marseilles my letters will meet me there."

"As the Signora pleases," was the reply, with such an increased vacuity of expression that a physician would have pronounced it indicative of acute softening of the brain, but I knew it only expressed "Idiot that I may be, I will see that every wish of my mistress is complied with."

The next morning we were driving to Civita Vecchia, with the reckless speed of post-horses, with well-

bribed drivers, and, at the appointed hour, went on board of the return steamer from Naples. The state-room was in readiness, every arrangement being made for my comfort.

Pietro's air of reflected grandeur—put on for the occasion—combined with a free use of my purse, had its use; while his intensity of humility, when addressing me, was intended to strike awe into all beholders. I presume it did, for I was deferred to in a most extraordinary manner. It was excessively annoying, for, entirely unaccustomed to being alone—my Wilderness days seemed far off—I felt as shy and as out of place as a girl. I was homesick for Roland before I left Rome; and when on the steamer, I could have cried for him like a child. The position of high dignity into which I was forced alone prevented my committing this absurdity.

There did not appear to be any one on board whom I knew, so on Sunday morning I sat alone on the deck, looking out on the glorious blue sea.

It was evidently the proper thing to rouse certain—not very original—thoughts about the days when Rome's gigantic arms encircled its waters. My success was quite encouraging. I had gone so far as to quote the words of the angel to St. John, which Roland once showed me: "The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

I was dwelling on its present tense, and thinking of

Rome in St. John's time, when suddenly a familiar figure attracted me. A lady, pale as death, dressed with exceeding richness, and with rather more coloring than was common, excepting with Americans, stood listlessly gazing at the water, with, perhaps, the same thoughts as mine.

I hesitated a moment, lest I might be mistaken ; then, with a feeling of real pleasure, put out my hand. "Ellen Ramsay, you dear girl !" I exclaimed ; for I was so lonely, I quite loved her.

"Mrs. Hartley, I believe," was the chilling rejoinder. "I am happy to meet you."

"Pardon my having forgotten that I am addressing Mrs. Henry Dedham," I returned, with equal frigidity.

She bowed languidly ; and then, as if each word were lifted from the depths below, explained : "We are traveling. We have been to Naples. Mr. Dedham declined to allow me to stop at Rome. He prefers I should not renew old acquaintances."

"You shall have no opportunity of doing so, that I can avoid," I hastily rejoined, moving away.

She colored, looked around anxiously—then, as if reassured by the absence of the devoted Henry, hastened to ask : "Is Victor Hartley alive ? I heard of his extreme illness when we were there."

"He is alive ; he will recover, and will probably

marry the lady to whom he was attached before he went to America," I replied, recklessly.

If Ellen could have grown paler than she was after the momentary color left her face, she would have done so ; as it was, she turned ashen gray.

I feared she would faint ; but a well-remembered voice brought her to herself ; and, as I hastened to turn my back, I heard : "My love, I am sorry to have left you so long. Are you ill ? The motion affects you ; I think a storm is coming ; we will go below. You ought not to have come up. You are better in your state-room."

"I like the air," murmured his victim.

"Yes, my love, of course ; and I will open the window below. You can lie down ; I will watch beside you. You are too delicate to be on the deck." And gallantly this fascinating pattern of devotion escorted his wife down-stairs.

Whether she committed suicide, or meekly died, and was secretly thrown overboard, I know not. I only know, that for the remainder of our short voyage, I saw no more of either.

Poor Ellen ! just as was her punishment, I sincerely pitied her. I could not doubt her interest in Victor, nor could I less doubt, that her life must be a horrible slavery. To a degree, she put the chains upon herself ; but, poor girl ! she could not know how deeply they would gall.

It seemed a horrible dream, and the mistress of land and sea was quite forgotten in thoughts of the cross-purposes of love affairs and marriages. The wealth of happiness poured upon my life seemed the only perfect thing in the world. Victor's illness was its only sorrow, and for that I knew the cure. Sometimes my faith in my ability to obtain this cure wavered a little, but I put down such a weakness, as unworthy of the first mission I had ever undertaken. In the midst of my meditations, Pietro appeared.

"If the Signora is ready, dinner is served."

Being unmistakably hungry, I hastened to the table, where the consideration with which I was treated was more annoying than ever. Pietro waited on me, and the waiters waited on him. Marie afterwards explained it to me; the regardless Pietro represented me as an Italian princess traveling incognita, on some diplomatic service for Pius IX. ! I did not hear this till long after, when Roland was beside me, to cover my vexation with shouts of laughter.

"No invention could have rendered you safer. Pietro is an artist," was all the notice he gave it.

I had no opportunity at the time to assert my birthright to the Stars and Stripes, for Mr. Dedham was correct in regard to a storm. It came upon us that night in great fury. I could not sleep, and, after a hasty and almost solitary breakfast, went on deck, where a safe corner was found for me, from which I

could watch the raging of the elements. I enjoyed it intensely. That force, whose coming we know not, and whose going we cannot tell, had always a fascination for me. I used to stand on my rocks in the Wilderness when storms were shaking the trees to their foundations, and watch the tossing of their great arms. Even then, my restless mind acknowledged the control of a Power that the winds obeyed, and now, as the great waves rose and fell, and our steamer was as a shell upon them, a thrill of joy went through my heart that I could trust in Him who said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther."

The Captain looked grave, but I spoke cheerfully to him, and whenever he passed my partly-sheltered corner he stopped to tell our progress. We reached Marseilles that night, and then he told me that my perfect calmness had helped him in the rush and dash, and in the straining of the boat. With so many wasted years to reproach me, I had a foolish satisfaction when, either by accident or design, I was of use to any human being.

On Wednesday we reached Heidelberg, and not until I was in my room at the Prinz Karl did my heart fail, lest the journey was unwise.

I re-assured myself by repeating my belief that a true woman could act upon her instincts; doubts were but stones in the path, the first impulse should bear me safely over all. I sent the servants to the

Castle, then drove over to Hilda. My heart sank a little, once more, as she opened the door herself, her warm welcome followed quickly by the question,

“Are you *alone*, dear Frau Hartley?”

“Quite alone, dear Hilda.” Being an American, and used to darts and starts on the part of my listeners, to say nothing of volubility, I expected at least a volley of questions, which would enable me to state my reasons for this extraordinary and unheralded appearance. But Hilda, showing neither anxiety nor emotion except her deathly paleness, waited. The situation was becoming embarrassing. I was for a moment at a loss, then, once more falling back on my instincts, made a desperate plunge.

“Roland and mamma are with Victor in Sorrento. He is increasingly ill. They are bringing him home, perhaps to die. Hilda—you alone can save him. Come back with me.”

Hilda looked at me as if she were listening for some far-off echo, perhaps to hear Victor, too, say “Come.” Then without a word she left the room.

I did not expect her to act exactly like any one else, but when an hour passed and I was still alone, when all the memories of the room were recalled, when I had recognized all the signs of woman’s mission in work and books, when I had looked reverently at organ, harp, and viol, I began to wonder what to do next. Time was hanging heavily. I

turned to the window, contrasting the trees, still bare of foliage, with the loveliness of a Roman spring—a little hand stole around my waist, a head rested on my shoulder. “Mildred—my sister—I will go with you.”

I turned and clasped the young girl to my heart. I kissed her, and loved her, and comforted her ; I told her we would save Victor. I thanked her, and called her brave and noble.

She was outwardly calm, but her eyes were burning with a new light, and she was listening to every word about her lover with a hungriness that fully satisfied me. Then, true to the original Hilda, she asked : “When shall we go ?”

“When can you be ready ?”

“I can go to-morrow,” was the encouraging reply. “Louise and Erich will take my work until I return.”

“Thank heaven for Louise and Erich !”

“Yes,” she said, with an arch look ; “and for Leo.”

“You true woman !” I exclaimed ; “you know we are all thanking Leo now. But we must not waste time in talking to-day. Do not trouble yourself about your wardrobe ; anything of mine will suit you, dear, if made a little shorter. There will be time enough for such things ; we will all be one family soon.”

After this shot, which fairly petrified my listener, I hastened to the drosky, calling back that I would send for the luggage, and myself come for her; then, with a wave of my hand, I drove off. I turned just before we were out of sight. She was standing exactly where I left her.

Pietro was, of course, waiting my return. "If the Signora has accomplished her affairs, when will she please to leave?"

Without informing him whether I had or not, I replied. "Take tickets for the mid-day train to Strasburg; an additional one for Signorita Hofmeyer, who will return with me. Until eleven to-morrow, I shall not need you. See what you can of the place."

Pietro bowed in deep depression. After his faithful services, to be deprived, for so many hours, of the superintendence of my affairs, made this low state of mind the correct thing. Roland had taught me to be amused instead of vexed by absurdities. I took no heed, therefore, of the airs and graces of his valet. I felt delightfully at home and independent at Heidelberg, and quite capable of taking care of myself. There were no bounds to my energy. I was up so early that I breakfasted with our old friends, the Bodenhausens, who expressed so much pleasure in seeing me, that I was moved to kiss them in a most effusive style. Gretchen gazed at me as if I had fallen

from the skies, pouring upon my head the most exaggerated titles that her imagination could invent.

We had so much to tell on both sides, that the hours I spent with them seemed but a few moments. To the good Frau I confided my scheme for carrying off Hilda. She applauded the enterprise warmly, and talked of the young girl as if she were a saint, telling me many incidents of her daily life of benevolence, and her care of the suffering, who were by no means confined to the animal world. She also gave me more particulars of her ministrations to the dying burglar, and the effect of the horrible scene upon her. "It has destroyed her light-heartedness, as by one blow," said the Frau. "She now performs her duties with a gravity that is almost painful."

There was a hopeful possibility that anxiety for Victor might be another cause for her gravity, but this I discreetly kept to myself. Our conversation encouraged me to feel more sure that I was right in my coming, and, in fine spirits, I went to speak to the Grossmutter, who was not able to be so early in her arm-chair. The dear old lady looked just as I had left her—not a wrinkle more or less—with the same sweet peace resting upon her as a mantle of light.

"Do you love the Lord, my child?" she asked, with a yearning look of longing, though with startling directness. "He has been very good to you."

"I try to," was my hesitating answer.

“Do you ‘try’ to love your husband? and what has he done for you in comparison with the Lord?” she asked, gently.

“I know,” I answered, “I am ungrateful; but I am learning a little. Daily, by precept and example, my husband brings me nearer to Him he serves. Do not despair of me, dear friend.”

“My child, I want you to have even more joy than you have now; and I want our boy Roland to have a wife in full sympathy with him. We loved both the boys; they were not like the students here. Their tutor was very wise; and my daughter made a home-life for them. We are glad to see you again, and to hear of your happiness. Tell them I send my love; and tell Victor the Lord hath need of him. He is not brave, to yield to weakness.”

“But he is ill; he is so weak he can scarcely speak aloud,” I explained.

“My child, he is too young; the *will* is wanting. There is something wrong. He wants a motive—a duty; tell him so for me.”

She kissed my hand in farewell; and her patient endurance of a life whose joys were all in the past—or, more truly, in the future—told, more than words could tell, the truth of the faith that sustained her.

There were so many last words, so many kind messages for each one, so many remembrances of and for dear mamma, who had gained the hearts of these

good people, that I told them I had not brought luggage enough in which to carry all these nice things away.


“Love takes no room, though it fills all space,” said the Frau, with her last kiss.

Then I returned to the hotel, and had a little talk with myself, trying to explain why the wayward, willful Mildred, of Hartley Hall, was alone at Heidelberg, genuinely interested in Grossmutter, Frau, and Fräulein, besides having on hand a wild project of uniting two hearts.

I gave it up. It was a problem too deep to solve ; for I distinctly recognized an actual thankfulness that the blessing of “love and duty” was not withheld from me.

CHAPTER XIX.

SAINT HILDA.

“OES the Signora wish that I go for the Signorita Hot—Hot—?”

“You will meet me at the station.

I will myself go for the Signorita Hofmeyer,” I replied, trying to impress the severe German name on the deeply-injured Pietro, whose trials, he wished me to feel, were making a wreck of him ; but I had no time to regard the sensitive nature of the valet. Hilda filled all my thoughts. No one but I should take her from her home. This was my venture. I could delegate nothing.

She was waiting ; it was Hilda's gift always to be ready ; a moment's notice was sufficient for her, for, by some mystery known only to herself, her multifarious work was never confusing ; whenever she was needed it had reached a stopping-place. She stood where I first saw her, on her little porch, looking inexpressibly lovely. A plain black dress and large linen collar ; (narrow ones were in vogue then) gave her a nun-like look ; a wide-brimmed hat shaded a face which wore a new expression of deprecating shrinking. Before this she had seemed immeasurably above me,

because she never doubted ; she was always sure of the right, and sure of how to do it. Now she was venturing on an untried path, in an untried world, and the calm, self-contained young girl feared to yield to her heart's bidding. If it proved a mistake, it would be impossible of correction. It was literally to save life by the sacrifice of herself. I thought of the maiden in the Golden Legend, who was willing to die for the Prince, and felt like a world-worn veteran by her side, and so I petted and protected her as if she were a child. A detention on the railway kept us that night in Strasburg. We had a whole evening for conversation. Away from home, alone with me, Hilda became confidential. She explained many things, and told many a struggle ; at last, with a blush, and yet with her own straightforward directness, she gave me quite a large sum of money, explaining, "This is a part of what I saved to build a hospital for animals. I have given up the project. Louise and Erich proved to me that it would be unwise. Erich discovered that useless animals had been maimed to induce me to give them a home ; this, he thought, would often be done, unless I could have a regularly organized corps of assistants to watch for and prevent such outrages."

"How hard it is to do good," I sighed, as sincerely as if the feeling were the result of a lifetime of efforts.

“It is hard to do all one wishes, in one’s own way,” replied my saint ; “but each one can do a little. A regular home for animals would present a temptation to poor people who have no use for their horses and donkeys during the winter months, and I could not, alone, prevent the misuse of it. Erich advised me to trust the Lord to send me just such work as he wishes me to do.”

“Erich is your style of Christian,” I said.

Hilda looked inquiringly at me. “I do not know. Is my ‘style’ different from yours?”

“Yes, altogether,” I replied. “But go on.”

“It was hard to give up my scheme, but these good friends proved so wise in all they did, that I willingly took their advice. Part of the money is invested to insure them a regular salary, for they devote their time to this object, in the same unobtrusive way that I have done. They will live in my house ; and this help, which is one of the results of my acquaintance with Leo, enables me to leave my home and my cares without anxiety. I have left everything, for I may soon return, you know. If I do, Leo is to come and live with me.”

“Blessings on Leo !” I ejaculated.

Hilda smiled. “We are always blessed in the simple performance of duty,” she said. “And now for the remainder of the money. I do not wish to go into your home in this heavy black ; will you send for

me to the Frenchwoman who makes your beautiful dresses, and order such as are suitable, dear Mildred? I do not like to wear colors now, but am I not right? Will not white be proper for me in the warm days in Rome?"

"Most proper, perfectly suitable, my most perfect of sisters. Do you ever forget anything, or ever make a mistake?"

"You have thought so," she said.

"Forgive us!" I exclaimed. "Keep us forgiven, lest we should ever again make so great a blunder. I will write this evening, and Madame Alphonse must forward, at once, all you need at present, perhaps to meet us at Marseilles. She can gain time on the nights and on the Sunday."

"Surely you will not tempt her to work on Sunday!" exclaimed Hilda, in horror.

"My dear, no; though I have no doubt she does, regularly. I mean the trunk containing your wardrobe can travel on Sunday while we stop."

"I am not sure it will be right for my trunk to travel, even if I do not."

At this the evil spirit within me laughed; I was struggling a little with principles, but had not reduced them all to practice. "Nor am I sure," said I. "I only know the trunk is not a moral agent, nor accountable; besides, it may not be sent till afternoon;

and you Lutherans allow great liberty on Sunday afternoons."

"Father and I kept all the day holy," she replied, without continuing the subject.

The order left Strasburg that night ; and, as a recommendation to Madame Alphonse, I must say a well-filled box reached us at Marseilles on Monday night ; so that my lovely Hilda entered Rome in one of the most beautiful traveling-dresses that Paris could produce. And, from that time, a white-robed maiden, pure as untrodden snow, brightened our curtained and shaded rooms, or gleamed through the corridors and in the garden, like an angel of light.

Always more influenced by externals than I liked to confess, even to myself, the graceful ease with which Hilda adapted herself to what I used to call "shackles of society," was very satisfactory. She seemed as unconscious of her exquisitely-draped summer silk, as she was of her hideous stuff dresses.

"All very nice and ladylike," I thought, and found this added to the interest with which, while we were on the steamer, I attempted to describe our life in Rome.

I put its strong contrast to her life simply on the fact of its being Italian instead of German, making much of the differences of climate as a cause. The possible result of her coming to us, farther than Victor's recovery, I dared not touch again. She shrank

like an unfledged bird, from any approach to it ; so the little fiction of the visit she was going to make to us was left undisturbed. Her heart fluttered, I knew, when I occasionally said "Victor's home ;" for a trembling blush, which for a moment seemed uncertain whether or no to rise, decided to overspread her fair face.

I hastened to explain our plans in case of Victor's recovery, and which, I can now confess, I improvised on the spot. "We are going to travel," I said, "when Victor is better. Mamma has seen nothing yet, except Heidelberg in winter, and Sorrento, under the shadow of illness. We will go as early as possible, and spend the summer in Switzerland. Perhaps Roland and I will return to America for the autumn. The climate there is unsurpassed at that season. You know, dear, we own uncle's houses together for five years, so that no disposition can be made of them until after that time. Everything is kept up for us, and we can go whenever we please."

Then I further enlightened my listener, by a description of Hartley Hall.

We talked until interrupted by Pietro, who referred the decision of a knotty point to my wishes. The Neapolitan steamer, in which we were to return, would not leave Marseilles until Tuesday morning, at four o'clock.

“Will the Signora pass Sunday at Dijon, or at Marseilles?”

Hilda had no choice.

“Then we will only go to Dijon to-morrow, and remain there till Monday,” I replied. Pietro disappeared. I use the word advisedly. I never remember to have heard his footfall; his comings and goings were weird-like. I explained to Hilda that spending Sunday at Marseilles would oblige us to pass Monday there also, and I knew that neither of us felt like spending two days in a noisy city. “Besides,” I continued; “I have some associations with Dijon. Roland and I were there one Sunday; we staid at the Hotel de la Cloche, the oddest, quaintest old place, all dark passages and unexpected rooms; it is built around a paved court, in which a wonderful carriage came for us to drive. We thought it must have belonged to one of the Dukes of Burgundy; Charles the Bold, probably, if he trusted his life to it. It appeared to be on the point of falling to pieces, and clattered into the court with its dying groans. Then it was painted the most sulphurous yellow, and was reached by a flight of steps that came down like a cataract of stones. They looked so savage that I had a shivery dread of their doubling up as I stepped on them, and clasping me in their iron hinges. The dukes must have had stronger voices than Roland and I. We literally shouted to

each other during the whole drive, for that wretched old chariot never ceased its noisy agonies. I think it was the merriest drive I ever had. Uncle Hartley had an old coach something like it, but happier in its mind."

"And your Sunday?" asked Hilda, laughing over my description.

"Now, you little Puritan; you are fancying we had all that good time on Sunday! No, it was Saturday afternoon. On Sunday we proposed to go to church, but there was nothing satisfactory to be found; instead of that, there was a sort of procession, in which some one on horseback, dressed as a clown, rode under our balcony, and held up a pole with a bag on it for money. I exclaimed at the sum Roland put in. He answered, 'It is some old-fashioned church service, my dear; this is a vestryman taking the collection.' That was all the part we took in the ceremony, I assure you, Hilda. Then, after the crowd were gone, and our faces properly straightened, we went out on a voyage of discovery. We found a cemetery, very peaceful and picturesque, carefully kept, and with walks nicely laid out. There was a white marble temple in it. 'As it is not labeled,' said Roland, 'I don't think it is a tomb.' So we passed our morning in it, talking of those high and glorious things that are so a part of Roland's life, that they never seem out of

place. In the afternoon we walked on the top of the old walls, made now into a sort of boulevard. All that long story tells why I fancy the old capital of Burgundy for our Sunday."

And so I continued to keep Hilda from thinking too much. Our Sunday in Dijon was quiet; a sort of preparation for our future. All day she wore an expression like some weary traveler, who found refreshments when his strength was well-nigh spent. She was calm and still; when I went to her room, she was seated with her Bible. I hastened to retreat, but her sweet voice detained me.

"Will you not come in and read with me, Mildred?"

"Certainly, dear, if I may do my part, by listening, and if you will read to me just what you have been reading to yourself."

She hesitated, then said, "I have been reading what will seem to you a strong contrast. The Sermon on the Mount, and the twenty-third Psalm. One tells the Christian how to live in action, the other how to live in thoughtful rest; yet in obeying the precepts of one, one finds the other. The work our Lord gives us is not always in green pastures and beside still waters, but they are not far off. When the hands are chafed and torn, they can be bathed in the waters, and when the feet are weary they can be refreshed on the soft grass."

Then she read to me. And this was Hilda !

* * * * *

The two weeks still wanted nearly two days to their completion, when we reached Rome. The letters received at Marseilles encouraged us to hope there would be no detention ; those we found at Rome told us to expect our travelers on Saturday evening.

On our arrival, we drove through the gloomy street and to our gateway. Hilda turned pale ; seizing my arm, she exclaimed, involuntarily :

“ Oh, this is a prison ! ”

“ Wait till you are inside, Birdie,” said I ; “ you will find the only prisoners are things of beauty ! ” Yet, as the gate swung heavily back, she shuddered.

Then ! But how can I explain to the dwellers in brown-stone houses, with curtained windows and furnace-heated air, of the paradise that was before us ?

Gennaro had more than done my bidding ; the court fairly blazed with gorgeous bloom, while the marble stairs, in perfect contrast, were bordered in their whole ascent with plants of soft, cool green. Through the arches a glimpse of the garden, with its trees all crowned with gold, added so unexpectedly to the picture, that I was startled by its beauty.

The pale face beside me was a study of radiant surprise ; by no other words can I describe its expression.

We were alone ; for, according to a much-to-be-commended custom, carriage and attendants vanished as by magic. There were no observers to my Hilda's transformation. So spacious was the court, and so widely open to the pale blue sky, that the idea of a prison fled, as winter flees before Italia's spring.

And the young girl ! Was she the heroine of Leo's cure ? She seemed, rather, a queen of flowers, as she went from one mass of fragrance to another, receiving the offering of the sweet-scented chalices.

“Come into the garden, Maud,” I sang, drawing her towards the steps. “Flowers in boxes are but half alive. Come.”

The sun had sunk a little lower—the trees had lost their crowns—the golden beams were now striking the upper windows of the villa on the other side of the river. Our own garden was in shadow, but it was a delicious hour to see it.

“Can you be happy here with those you love ?” I asked, as we descended the steps.

“Do you really *live here* ?” was the rather unexpected question.

“Most certainly, my queen. We live and love, and laugh and sing, and this shall be your kingdom, too.”

“I thought you had brought me to see some beautiful garden. Is it right to live like this ? Can one

remember the duty of ministering to the suffering? Is it best to be so shut out from sorrow?"

"Hilda," I answered gravely, "nowhere can one be shut out from sorrow. Sickness and death have been within these walls. An agony was once lived here that ended only with life. We may have sorrow here again; we need not crave its presence. Let us rather accept the hope and promise of life that I have tried to symbolize by all these opening flowers. Victor *shall* be well. We are going to hold high carnival of joy. Sorrow will come when it is appointed for us."

I could not express myself with the familiar language used by the Lutherans, though when Hilda crossed her hands and spoke she did not seem irrelevant.

"The Lord has brought us to green pastures; we will not refuse to rest in peace, and wait his will."

I had no idea of indulging this gravity, but, as we walked on, pointed to the noseless statues.

"If you are too happy, you can discipline yourself by contemplating both destruction and decay," I said, laughing.

We walked to the river; then I remembered that the modern Romans go inside for the hour of sunset, and, though we rarely regarded this, I would not expose Hilda to either real or fancied danger.

“ ‘Behold the hill-tops, all aglow
With purple and with amethyst ;
While the whole valley, deep below,
Is filled, and seems to overflow,
With a fast-rising tide of mist,
Let us go in, ’ ”

I repeated, proposing to accept the suggestion.

“Whom do you quote ?” asked my listener, as we turned.

“Prince Henry.”

“Who is he ?”

“Ah, that is my secret ! He has more to say on the coming danger :

“ ‘But linger not ; for while I speak
A sheeted specter, white and tall—
The cold mist—climbs the castle wall,
And lays his hand upon thy cheek.’ ”

“You and Prince Henry are mistaken ; the shade is a little chill, but there are no cold specters in this summer air.” And she laughed, as she added : “I believe, Mildred, this land of flowers affects your brain. You have given me already a dozen odd names.”

“Only Queen, and Fastrada, and Elise, and Maud, and a few others. I learned this from Roland.”

“I suppose I must learn to *glide* and *sail*, instead of walk ; my dresses will be *robes* ; and I must *ascend* and *descend* the marble steps, instead of going up and

down. Ah, Mildred, how can I ever be anything but the hard-working little woman I have always been?"

"'Work' is a convertible term," I replied, much amused with Hilda's views of things; "one need not be prosaic. Your life shall be all poetry, your words all song, and yet you shall not fail of duties. There, you did not less carefully raise that curtain, because I might describe the action as drawing aside the heavy drapery, and holding it suspended by one white arm! Did you ever hear of Corinne? Some time I'll show you the heavy leather curtain at St. Peter's, which she is said to have lifted and gracefully held aside. Hercules might have done it, perhaps. But it sounded better than to say she pushed her whole weight against it, and, raising it about a foot, crowded through."

"I am as clay in the hands of the potter," returned my prize—so precious to me that I was ready for any amount of nonsense, rather than allow her time for one regret or fear.

We were in my room by this time. "Now pass the sunset hour in learning this is a veritable home, in proof of which see this room next to mine which I have had prepared for you. You have a lovely view of the garden and of the Tiber—do you mind my saying the word reverentially? Such an old patriarch as he is inspires me with respect. The secrets he could tell, the

treasures he could reveal, make me wonder at his cool composure."

"He rises sometimes, does he not?"

"Yes, when he cannot endure the burdens of secrecy any longer. It will be a sad day for our garden when an inundation comes. You can look, too, at that lovely villa, the afternoon sun lights it superbly. We have fireplaces, my dear, but there is no need for them now, this brazier will take off the evening chill," and I stirred its coals in explanation.

"What a comical thing! It would not be of much use in Heidelberg."

"Of course not, yet it is often just enough to temper a sort of chill that winter forgets to take with him, and which lingers in our spring; but you have not seen all our conveniences; here in this corner is a door, opening on a little corkscrew staircase, which will land you, faint and dizzy, in the garden, or, by going into the breakfast room, you will find a similar mode of escape, which will take you into the court. So, dear, although our rooms all connect we can reach the lower floor without going to the great stairway."

"It is all delightfully odd and new," she replied; "forgive me if I make no end of mistakes at first."

"There is one safeguard against total loss; from wherever you start if you walk through the doors opposite to those you enter, you will inevitably go through every room and return to the spot you left.

Now, my queen, Marie has laid out one of those new white "robes," make yourself lovely in it and then in a half hour meet me in the dining hall, the third room on your right as you face the garden; don't mistake the court for the garden, and turn the wrong way, you will have a long walk if you do," and with a kiss I left my guest to her toilet.

"We usually dine early," I said, as Hilda came at the appointed time; "but that extraordinary refreshment on our drive from Civita Vecchia was a travesty of dinner. It will be warm enough for the garden, I hope, this evening; certainly, in the tent. Pietro shall put a rug on the floor for us. The moon will be in perfection. The danger of malaria passes with the hour of sunset, you know."

"It seems as if it must be fancy," she said; "and the sunset hour is the loveliest of the day."

"We do not always regard the precaution, but they say here, that only Englishmen and dogs walk in the sun, and idiots stay out at sunset; it is wiser to be a Roman, you know."

Guests were announced soon after, and I presented to them, "Signorita Hofmeyer, who is visiting me, and to whom I am to have the pleasure of showing Rome."

It was a very warm evening, "Quite safe to pass it in the garden," said one of our old friends,

who knew Rome's hidden dangers. "The Signora's tent gives us sufficient protection."

"The Signora's tent" was an arrangement of Roland's, to permit me to sit out of doors whenever I pleased. It was placed near one of the fountains, where there was a very beautiful view. It had a floor, comfortable seats, and a hanging lamp for the evenings. To this we repaired, first walking in groups of twos or threes about the garden. My lovely Signorita's eyes fairly danced with delight as the moon-lit scene lay before her. Certainly I could never have brought her to Rome at a more beautiful season. It took me back to one year before, when we had our moonlight parties at Hartley Hall. There was just that same glorious light which good Juno described—"de moon is shinin' now, like it was 'stracted." Poor Juno—I gave her a kindly thought, as my guests gathered in the tent for conversation.

There were very earnest inquiries about Victor, and Hilda's look of amazement nearly convulsed me, as I bravely asserted we had reason to believe he would now recover; of course, he might be much fatigued on his return, and unable to see his friends for several days, but of his ultimate restoration we had no doubt. The serenity with which I received congratulations on this happy improvement was nearly destroyed by another glimpse of Hilda's eyes.

I had quite forgotten that I told her he might be coming home to die ; my faith in her power had vanquished my fears.

From my first introduction, I never wondered at Victor's love for the German girl, and now she had an added charm from the tacit acknowledgment of her own. Presently she turned quite away from me, and I brought the conversation back to Rome. I say "back," because with Romans it is usually of Rome. She soon gained all hearts by her interest in the city of their love and pride. The way in which she made herself understood was perfectly fascinating ; French, English, and some knowledge of Italian were all brought to her aid, and with her quick perceptions, quite a brilliant conversation was carried on. "I was right," I said to myself. "Hilda will soon be as much at home here as in her music room ; my fair sister will be a success." It was all very gratifying, and though, when our friends left us, the hour was late, we were too happy to be tired.

"How could you talk so about Victor?" was the first question.

"How could I help it, now that I have had you a week all to myself?"

Hilda looked distressed, and I hastened to say,

"Forgive me, dear. I know Victor is really ill, but I know illness sometimes disappears before hap-

piness. We all believe in change of air, to cure diseases ; why may not the air the heart breathes be as important as that of the lungs. It is part of the great mystery of love, that it is life-giving."

"You expect too much from me," she said. "I am in a sort of dream ; an enchanted palace. I dare not collect my thoughts ; I know not why I have done this. Oh, Mildred ! *am* I right ?"

"Yes, Hilda, yes, you are right to do and dare anything for the man you love, and who loves you ; who has bound you to himself in the mazes of this 'mystery.' No better name do I know for it. I hardly know its depth, I am nowhere near its meaning, but I know it is for eternity ; and as it dawns upon you at last, I can only tell you what I feel for you, in the words from Longfellow's poem, that come to me whenever I think of your coming as you have done.

" 'As thou sittest in the moonlight there—
 Its glory flooding thy golden hair,
 And the only darkness that which lies
 In the haunted chambers of thine eyes—
 I feel my soul drawn unto thee
 Strangely and strongly, more and more,
 As to one I have known and loved before ;
 For every soul is akin to me
 That dwells in the land of mystery.' "

"Prince Henry again ?" asked the girl, as she slid her hand in mine.

“A part of his story. I will tell you of him when we have Victor back again. It is midnight—a Roman night. I am glad your first knowledge of this city has been brightened by this beautiful evening; will you not accept it as a good omen? See how fearlessly and clearly the moon gazes upon us. Not a cloud—hardly a speck of star-dust to dim that fearless light! Dear sister, do not hesitate one instant. You have done right.”

We went up the steps, through the heaven-lighted court—not a being in sight. Hilda clung to me. “Are you afraid, dear? I can summon a dozen servants in a moment.”

“Not afraid—no; but utterly mazed and dazed. It does not seem like life; it surely is not death. Is it sleep?”

This would not do. I roused life instantly with my whistle, and gave various matter-of-fact directions, which were wholly unneeded, except to reassure my guest: “Have the garden gates closed now, Pietro, and order breakfast late. Is Marie in my room?”

“Marie is in the Signora’s room,” was the answer. “Will the Signora take refreshments?”

“Will you have something, Hilda?”

“Nothing, thank you.”

The tone of her voice was more natural; and, as we entered my room, where Marie was waiting, her color returned and deepened, till she was herself again.

Hilda's experience had been practical ; the land of poesy and song was a new world to her. She thought there was danger in a life in which she saw no care. She could not believe in its truth, nor comprehend that it might have a solid foundation. She believed in actual work, and in a beauty developed from rough surroundings, or found in nature. She loved to seek it, and to brighten the precious gem by her own power ; she feared to accept the possibility of a genuine happiness richly set, or that rose before her like the faultless Mausoleum of Taj Mahal.

We were so unlike ! I loved what was prepared for me, what came easily ; Hilda, what she herself perfected. In music she was different ; that was not to her a luxury of life, it was a necessity. She sang as easily as she talked, and had a peculiar gift of imitating natural sounds, which I fancied was the reason of her influence over the animal world ; they, at least, recognized her sympathy.

I closed the curtains, to shut out the moon-light, gave up Prince Henry, and stirred the coals in the most matter-of-fact way, drawing two arm-chairs beside them. "Come," I said, "let us make ourselves comfortable ; Marie will do, or rather *undo*, our hair for us."

Hilda laughed. "I never have been waited on," she said. "I will unbraid mine and look at yours." So we put our feet on the brazier, whilst Marie

unfastened the heavy masses, which her skilled hands made less burdensome than when my own arms ached over them. Hilda exclaimed in wonder, as coil after coil was unrolled, and fell around me. Then I amused her with a story of my old trouble with it; how I likened it to a dead tree, under whose branches I was hidden. Meanwhile her own sunny tresses came down, and were put up again loosely for the night, while Marie performed the same office for me.

“A year ago Victor brought me a picture of you, Mildred; we talked of your hair, and thought the artist had exaggerated its quantity. ‘Perhaps it is a wig,’” he said.

“The wretched man! how dare he?” I exclaimed.

“Our ideas of Americans in their own country were a little shadowy. We do not affect ignorance as the English do, but we really did examine the details of the picture, to see if you dressed as we did.”

“What did you decide?” I asked, thinking of Hilda’s quaint costumes.

“You were unlike Gretchen and me; but you looked like the fashion-plates in the shops.”

“Oh, you dreadful girl! If I had supposed my pictures were before such a tribunal, I would have suppressed them all.”

“Did you send them?”

“No, nor did I know they were sent; so I could not have prevented it, after all. Now,” I said, feeling

that Hilda was reassured, "shall we say good-night, and prosaically go to bed? I will not say, 'disrobe and retire to our couches.'" "

"Pray do not," she laughed; and, as Marie left us, she threw her arms around me and kissed me. "Forgive me, Mildred; I am a great trouble to you; but if you knew how my heart sinks, not only at the fearful thing I have done, but at all this new life, you would have patience with me."

"And have I not? do I not prove to you that hearts beat the same in our marble halls, as in dear old Heidelberg? Happiness is the same in any setting. A gem is not more valuable because it is extracted from the hideous head of a toad!"

"You are 'dreadful' now; but I know what you mean. I am foolish to distrust what comes so easily."

"Yes, Hilda, it is the same here as there; the same watchful care that was always trying to shield you in your old home, will be no less protective here. Victor's love for you is no new growth, nor boyish flame; for years you have influenced his whole life. At my uncle's, your image was ever present with him. He was fitting you, in imagination, to our American life; and when we proposed to come abroad, his first thought was that I could know you. It is not weakness to love as he loves. There was no weakness of any kind in Victor, until this illness, added to hopelessness, has made him what he is. You were his

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light ; he dwells in darkness now. I *know* he will be restored, when he can see clearly once more. Listen ! the clock strikes one. Do you know we only landed at Civita Vecchia this morning, and that we ought to be tired and sleepy ?”

“I know nothing but what you tell me, Mildred ; and when you cease to speak, I seem to dream.”

“Dream in reality, then. I am coming back, presently, to sing you to sleep.”

But Hilda was already asleep when I went to her again. This greatly relieved my anxiety ; for her heightening color was alarming. Her habitual composure had misled me ; she was showing herself, now, a fitting mate for the Italian boy—my own dear Victor !

I watched beside her until the unnatural color subsided. Then I knew it was not fever ; and, arranging the draperies so that the morning light should not disturb her, I imprinted a soft kiss on the pure forehead, and left her to rest.

CHAPTER XX.

VICTOR!



THE following day, my guest gave no sign of her perturbations, and I was so fearful of rousing them, that, instead of proposing that Marie should unpack the trunks, I advised her to arrange her own possessions, so that she might feel more homelike. Fortunately a wounded bird was picked up in the garden; of course I carried it up among the French dresses, giving Hilda more comfort than I could comprehend. She knew just what to do, and as the little creature could not fly, a cage was brought, and in it the sad baby songstress placed in the window.

“Its mother will come and feed it,” said the young physician; “the little chirp will call her. How sweet it is.”

“Your work follows you, dear,” I said; “you need not fear idleness. But though I love the music of a bird *song*, I do not like a bird *cry*.”

“How strange,” said she meditatively, as if it were a problem; “but we are not alike. I like all natural sounds, except the cry of pain, and the most attractive music to me is that which most nearly

reproduces them. What can equal that C minor Bird Song of Beethoven's, or his perfect imitation of the woodland concerts in the ninth symphony. That is in minor too ; I wonder why ?”

“A wailing cry like that of your new patient is very ‘minor’ indeed ; but why their carols are so written I do not know. I like music better that seems a creation, not an imitation.”

“Man cannot create : his best work is but an imitation.”

“Expressions of emotions or passions are hardly imitations, certainly not of *sounds* ; they are reproductions in new forms, and the nearer they approach perfection the more you feel them to be actual expressions of feeling,” I returned.

“The more accurate the reproduction, whatever it may be, the more perfect the imitation,” laughed Hilda ; “but I have no power to argue ; my faith in myself has come back a little since last night ; it is unnatural for me to dream. Will you accept my everyday nature, Mildred ?”

“Without a shadow of change I will accept it ; and now, when your last book and ribbon finds a place, let us take a drive. They will not come till after dinner ; we have several hours yet.” As we drove out of the gate Hilda involuntarily closed her eyes. “That is right,” I said, laughingly, putting my hand over them ; “shut out the gloomy streets ; you

need not look till you reach the Corso, unless you might chance to want to see the Pantheon."

"Of course I do," she replied, laughing. "I did not want to feel again as I did when I first saw these walls ; but I am not so foolish as to lose anything interesting."

"Then open your eyes again, widely and boldly ; for everything is interesting. Madame de Staël says, 'Rome is not an assemblage of dwellings ; it is a chronicle of the world, represented by figurative emblems.' Everything speaks in Rome. Even the wretched houses we are passing are formed of stones which could 'cry out' a story that would thrill the coldest heart. The very beggars are traditional and representative ;" and I stopped to give money to an exquisitely beautiful girl, who, leading a decrepit old man, cried : "Dammi qualche cosa, per l'amor Madonna !"

"Is she worthy ?" asked Hilda.

"Probably not ; perhaps not even poor ; but she is Roman and picturesque."

"But is it right to encourage pauperism ?"

"No ; very wrong indeed, according to all the laws and regulations of well-regulated communities ; but this is not a well-regulated community ; and, not being intrusted with its reformation, I throw my responsibility on Pius IX., enjoy the beggars, and de-

light in the showers of blessings my scattered *baiocchi* bring upon me."

Hilda shook her head, and murmured something about individual responsibility, and efforts to do the poor creatures permanent good ; but I would not hear. "You may establish schools, if you wish, and hospitals for the maimed ; but the Pope, and all his legions, will inform you that he prefers to attend to his own children ; and when he gives such information, it is wiser to heed it. In truth, you can do nothing. It is too extensive a subject for to-day. Here is the Temple of all the Gods. You may look at the portico, which Agrippa added to an older building, and at the dome, which was once covered with plates of silver. One glance only to-day ; you will have time enough for the antiquities."

She looked with deep interest, but sighed reproachfully when I handed out the copper coins to the crowd that surrounded our carriage, while we stopped. "Un baijocco, per me infelice," entreated one ; "che ho perduta una gamba."

"Poor creature ! Has he really lost a leg ?" she asked.

"No, my dear, not at all ; it is tied up under his cloak. But lots of them *have* lost legs. He is a representative beggar, and has one too many. You really must become accustomed to this feature of our city, repulsive though it be. Now we are turning into the

Corso, our main street, where our shops are. These streets end in the Piazza del Popolo, where we are going—the Ripetta on our left, the Babuino on our right, the Corso is between them. We are turning now into the Piazza di Spagna. I want to show you something, presently, in the Via Babuino. Here was the Naumachia, where Domitian delighted in mock naval battles—real enough to the poor creatures who perished for his amusement !”

“Stop a moment ; let me look at that superb flight of steps.”

“They lead to the church known as Trinita di Monti ; you shall hear the music there some day ; the gardens of Lucullus were upon that hill, and his villa, which was so recklessly extravagant that Plutarch calls it a ‘frivolous amusement.’”

“We can hardly fancy the magnificence of the Roman nobles. Was it not Lucullus whose apartments had different names, and to each a separate appointment of luxury ?”

“Yes ; Pompey and Cicero proposed to dine with him once, on the condition of his giving no orders for the entertainment. He consented, saying only, in a careless tone, to an attendant, ‘We will sup in the hall of the Apollo.’ The result was a superb banquet in the most gorgeous of all the rooms ; the secret being that each hall had its separate allowance of both plate and provisions. Then Messalina rioted

there, with bacchanalian feasts, and there was murdered ; this church is near the spot, so say the wise men. The church only dates from 1494 ; it is called 'modern.' You cannot fancy how strange that seems to us, for our country was only discovered two years before !”

“My dear Mildred, you are a regular guide-book ; have mercy on my reason. I cannot compass a world's history in a day.”

“That is a serious difficulty here, with even more than ordinary capacities,” I replied, laughing ; “there is a world's history in every acre of ground—but I aimed at amusement to-day ; some time you shall have a red-covered Murray, to tell you what to see, and a blue-covered Byron, to tell you what to think, as they say here tourists do. But we have come to what I drove through the Babuino for. See that old blind man, seated in the shadow of the wall, by his side a chained eagle. Is not that a picture of Italy ? Blind to her past and her future, learning no lessons from her downfall, but motionless under the shadow of her walls, a personification of 'voiceless woe.' Close beside, *Freedom* in chains. The keen-eyed bird is hopeless as his master. He may long for sight, and long for flight ; but Italy has chained him !”

“It is not all joy here,” Hilda replied, with tears in her voice.

“The days are coming when the eyes of the blind will be opened—when chains will be broken ; there

are those who tell of what is in store for Rome. Some even dare to say that in a year or two her eagles will soar again. But we have reached the Piazza del Popolo, with its three fountains, its mystic obelisk—another history of ages, with hieroglyphics that Moses may have read—hiding its secrets now in those strange characters. The gate opposite was built with the stones of the old Flaminian. The Gauls rushed through it, to be once awestruck at the Senators, seated calmly awaiting them in the Forum. Constantine, laurel-crowned, entered there. All this locality was the Campus Martius. Did I not tell you there is a voice in every stone?"

"Yes—voices that bewilder and overwhelm me. What are these grand gates, and these superb drives? Is this an entrance to a palace?"

"No, but to one of the loveliest pleasure-grounds in the world. We will drive up; and now"—as we reached the garden—"feast your eyes on the surroundings; and then ask me for water from the fountain of Trevi, that you may never pay a last visit to Rome."

"I will drink there," she said, in a low voice.

Then we were silent. I had no need to say, "There St. Peter's dome cuts the sky; there winds the Tiber."

Presently, with a sigh, she turned. We looked down, then, upon the Borghese gardens, gorgeous in

color, rich in lawns, watered by crystal fountains, gleaming among ilexes and acacias, where statues of gods and heroes, grown old and gray, were shrinking back among their memories, as the cold touch of French fashions grated upon them. Paradises of beauty ! but with a speech only to those who have within their souls the spell of Rome's mystic name. We were nearly alone. It was not the hour for the crowd of carriages, and the gay scenes of the afternoon ; nor was there quite the beauty of the westering sun. It was high noon—full, glorious day ! I had never been there at this hour, and the loneliness made it more impressive. Though familiar, and already endowed with the name of Home, it was always new ; and I could well feel with Hilda, whose calm soul was stirring with emotions she only half understood. She had studied and loved her old castle, which, in comparison, was but a *point* in history. Here was a *world* !

There were a few equestrians on the hill ; one of them, an old friend of the family, joined us, pointing out to the stranger many places of interest. Then, with the courtesy of the Italian gentleman, he asked us to join a moonlight party in the Coliseum, where was to be music and every attraction. I ventured to urge Hilda's going, but firmly, though gracefully, she declined. She said she was yet too strange to go without me, so, with a bow reminding me of my uncle,

our friend left us. "I could not go," she said; "driving and talking with you is different. I could not go among those who do not know the under-current of our thoughts. This drive has been enchanting; I have said little, for there is the strangest feeling of transformation about me. I seem to be some other person, looking at my old self."

"Perhaps the dear, useful Hilda is still among her dogs and birds, while she sends a part of her spirit to heal our wounded boy."

"I cannot keep you to plain common sense," she replied, laughing, with a gesture of resignation.

"You frightened me into it last night," I returned. "I vowed never to quote a line of poetry to you again, nor to take you out in the moonlight without an umbrella! I spirited you away too suddenly for you to realize that you are here. Did not the old schoolmen fight over the question whether or not an angel could go from one place to another without crossing the intermediate space?"

"I believe so, and am disposed to think I have taken an angelic flight; my descent into this marble wilderness, this sea of ruins, has been fearfully sudden."

"Have patience with the ripples this sudden descent has made; they will widen and widen, till the surface is smooth again."

"Meanwhile, I am to sink—is the conclusion."

“Most practical of iconoclasts, *no!* I cannot find figures to fit every point of a star. We must return; we have been three hours.”

Hilda forgot to close her eyes as we neared our gate; she could see through it now with the eyes of her heart. We were both better for our drive, and more hopeful.

At dinner it was difficult to keep up our composure. Fortunately, the presence of the servants prevented any emotional conversation. I could have borne no more; for Hilda's sake I had quieted my own heart's fears, and in Hilda's presence had been roused to hope. Now the end was near; and with positive dread I listened for every sound.

Our dinner was over; my trembling guest had just remarked—with the same brilliancy which had shone in our words since we returned from our drive—“What a very clear day it is!” when the noise of the carriage entering the gate was heard at last. It seemed ten hours since we came home.

For a moment we listened; then Hilda went flying to her room. It was a revelation, to see her desperate pull as her long train caught on one of the hooks of the rug, and the utter indifference with which she left a yard of Madame Alphonse's exquisite ruffling attached to the unyielding nail. The Heidelberg Fräulein was never in haste, nor did she ever willfully

destroy anything! This regardless young lady was of warmer blood.

I ran, with nearly the same speed, in the opposite direction; but it was only to see Victor carried in Roland's strong arms to his room. I stood back in dismay. My hopes were like a stone cast into the sea, before the marble whiteness of his dear face. It was too terrible to believe! "Oh, mamma!" I exclaimed, "is he dead?"

"No, no, my dear child, no! but he is utterly exhausted; he has not slept for several nights, and nearly fainted when we entered the court. Roland was almost as pale, but carried him directly up. He is frantic to see you. I will go and release him; Pietro is there."

I stood transfixed! and then—but my meeting with Roland is something I will not tell; it is exclusively my own affair. I have so entirely sacrificed the privacy of our "love-making," our engagement, and our marriage, for the benefit of my readers, that I feel fully exonerated from any necessity to tell what it was to be once more folded in those dear, protective arms—once more to feel that I need neither act nor think, but *rest*.

"Is Hilda here?" was one of the first questions, after he had fully satisfied himself that I had not lost a particle of color, and was neither tired nor ill.

"Yes. I succeeded in bringing her; she is as

lovely as ever, but frightened at having come to such a degree that I dare not allow her to think. She has hidden in her room ; is it too late for her to do any good ?”

“She can at least rouse Victor to some interest in life once more. When I feel what you are to me, mein Herzchen, it seems as if he might be himself again in Hilda’s presence. It seems horribly weak in him, Milly ; Victor always had an uncertain gentle nature, with none of my bravery (which you may remember, dear) ; he never had faith in himself. Then that fearful pneumonia made him physically weak ; you and I cannot judge for him.”

“I never judged him other than kindly, and I think I see his mother’s life of uncertainty of her husband’s love, reproduced in him. We cannot tell what agonies she suffered in her short life ; her victory was never over her husband’s heart ; she must have known it. I cannot believe in self-deception on that subject. But—can I see Victor ?”

“Not till to-morrow, my darling ; you have been so brave, have done so much. Our old home is as beautiful as a dream, now——” Then Marie rushed in, like a French fanatic.

“Oh, Madame ! s’il vous plait—Mademoiselle, the lady of the North—has faint, elle a l’air, what you call ? a kops, kops. A died person, un cadavre !”

We ran to Hilda ; she was lying on the marble

floor of the loggia, by her room, where she must have watched Victor's arrival, and seen his deathly paleness when Roland carried him up. Full of self-reproach at my neglect of the poor girl, whose torturing anxiety I had never thought of relieving, we placed her on her bed, as still and pale as her lover.

It was long before she came to consciousness, and then, seeing Roland, she exclaimed: "Tell me, tell me he is not dead! Oh, his white, white face!" and she shuddered, as Roland hastily assured her that Victor was not materially worse, only exhausted from the journey.

"My precious Hilda, forgive me for not coming to you at once! I did not think of your seeing him."

"You have had trouble enough with me already, Mildred; do not think of this. I am better. I never fainted before in my life, and could not imagine what was the matter, when, the moment I saw Victor, everything turned dark. Then, the next thing—I was on the bed, and you beside me. I am ashamed of such weakness."

"We are all liable to faint. I did, once."

"Just for an instant," put in Roland, mischievously.

"Long enough to make me very uncomfortable," I returned, severely. "Now, dear, I will send you some hot wine, and a bulletin from our boy. Come, Roland, and find out how he is."

The account was not very favorable; but no new

danger was apprehended. He had expressed pleasure at being at home, and sent his love to me. Of Hilda's presence he knew nothing ; mamma and Roland had faithfully kept the secret. In truth, they doubted whether she would come, as much as they feared to approach the subject.

"If Juno had not gone herself, Hilda would not have been persuaded out of her life," said Roland.

"An uncommonly wise speech for a man," I retorted ; "that she came at all, deserves high praise."

At which my husband was uncivil enough to give a long, low whistle.

I made the best I could of Victor's condition, and after sunset persuaded Hilda to join us in the garden ; for our patient insisted on relieving us all, and being left with Pietro.

No guests were admitted—no outside guests ; but we brought a crowd of emotions to our Roman paradise that evening : gratitude, that we were reunited ; hope, of Victor's recovery and happiness ; peace, in our home life ; joy, in its fullness of blessings, and love, for each dear one, including, in its soft rest, the young girl whom we were determined should make one of us.

She was more lovely, more saint-like than ever, even though she reasserted her common sense in a way that surprised us, while it relieved the embarrassment on both sides. To her clear mind, after having fainted at seeing Victor, farther reticence became

unworthy affectation. She talked quietly of him ; of her desire to see him, as soon as he could bear it ; of how she intended to watch over him, and care for him ; then, too, she did not prevent her voice from taking a tender, caressing note, when she spoke his name.

For a part of the evening, mamma carried her off into one of the sequestered groves, whilst Roland and I reveled in the moonlight. That husband of mine rarely sought shade ; he seemed able to bear any amount of light, and the only impatient expressions I ever heard from him were of darkness, or of cold.

Presently there came a message from Victor, asking us to sing for him ; his window was open, and he on a couch close beside it, could hear perfectly. Hilda did not venture to join us, but mamma, Roland and I sang, filling the air with one of the loveliest bits of music that man was ever inspired to write.

“Schlaf wohl, du süsßer Engel du.”

Just as the last note had taken its sweet message to our “boy,” (mamma made this word familiar to me) we heard delicious strains from the river. We hastened to the balustrade, where a boat load of musicians were playing a welcome to the travelers. It was a kind thought from our friends who were passing the evening in the Coliseum ; they sent their band to us, much to our delight, as well as Victor’s.

I rallied Hilda on her conquests, telling mamma of her circle of admirers on the previous evening; but the poor child was in no mood for jests, and when the music was ended we went inside. Our latest news from Victor told us that he was better, and so glad to be at home that he was sure of improvement.

“Milly,” said Roland, when we were left alone, “I am overwhelmed with your power of transformation; am I, I?—or, am I *not* I? Do you intend trying to turn me into anybody else; am I already changing? Let me belong to you still, Diana” (pathetically).

“What wild fancies are in your brain now?” I asked, in surprise.

“Your usual accuracy fails you, my best beloved. I get rid of my fancies when I clothe them in words, and give them wings; they are ‘in’ my brain no longer, but new thoughts and fears are seething in that caldron of wisdom.”

“I’m waiting,” said I, patiently.

“Hilda Hofmeyer in a French dress!!!”

* * * * *

The next day was Sunday. I persuaded them all to go to our English church, outside of the Porta del Popolo, leaving the invalid in my care. Mamma hesitated at trusting even me with her precious boy, but my newly-found executive talents were in my favor. She finally yielded, and Roland escorted the

two ladies to the unpretending house of God, which was in an old stable. Wise men and kings worshipped in a stable once, and I revered our little church the more for this reason. The services would be a comfort to Hilda, I knew, and would help the devout Lutheran to realize that there could be hours of prayer and holy communion in the land of flowers and music, and that the Reformer's God was present even in Rome, according to the legend, "Lux, lucet in tenebris."

When they were gone, I went to Victor; having my first look at the pale face, sunken eyes, and emaciated frame. His welcome was touching in its warmth and sadness, and his patient smile brought tears to my eyes.

"Here I am again," he said; "a failure of a man; you must let me lie here and listen to the sweet home sounds; I will try not to disturb you, dear."

"You *cannot* disturb us, but as to your lying here, I have not the faintest idea of permitting it. You have made me mistress of your house, for the present; I shall assert my authority over you," and I took the thin hand in mine, and sat down beside him.

"You shall be its mistress forever, if you like, Milly."

"But I don't 'like;' and refuse the position, unless you come among us. When will you have your chair brought to the dining-hall, and sit by the table?"

“If you will answer one question, I will put myself under your control.”

“I will answer whatever you ask.”

“Has anything been heard from Hilda lately? Mamma and Roland avoid the subject so carefully, I am afraid to ask them. Roland fears I cannot bear it, I was so overpowered about that burglar.”

“I do not wonder at that; but I cannot fancy my disagreeing with Roland. I am sure we both would love to give you good tidings of her.”

“Then it is that you have no good tidings;” and he turned wearily from me.

“Not that, dear Victor; no, but I am sure I will hear soon. Do you think you could be carried down to the garden to-morrow? I expect to hear from her then; and when you are comfortably seated, I will tell you.”

“Why not now?”

“Because, my dear boy, to-morrow will be the day. I want you to be in the garden, among my flowers, when you have my tidings.”

“I will go, if my bed is lowered into the court, like the man in the gospel, if I am only to hear that she has asked for me. I know I am weak; but think, Mildred, I cannot go to her! I cannot even write her a letter. Weak, indeed! but my love is strong. It has almost conquered my life.”

“Let it strengthen your life; let it be a reason for you to be a strong man again.”

“Ah, Mildred, you have some good news. Blessings on your bright head, my darling sister! I am better already; and by to-morrow I may be able to walk.”

I laughed cheerfully, and asserted I saw the improvement. “And now tell me,” I said, “did you see the floral decorations when you came in?”

“No,” said he, “I closed my eyes; I did not care for flowers.”

“You are an ungrateful boy, then, for I directed every combination of the colors in a way that nearly drove Gennaro insane. He perpetually reminded me,

“‘But, Signora, if I cannot find a plant in full bloom?’

“‘You must,’ I replied. ‘I must have at such and such points certain masses of color, as backgrounds for the pillars.’ So, by dint of insistence, we have a perfect Blumenfest for you.”

“Make me happy, that I may be able to enjoy it, dear sister.”

“I will, Victor; be content. Do you know it is Sunday? and good people read their Bibles, when they don’t go to church. I want to tell you something that Hilda read to me one day——”

“When, Milly?”

“Oh, one day when we were talking about good

things. She told me that the Sermon on the Mount would tell me what to do, and then, if I remember rightly, the twenty-third Psalm would tell me how to rest, after I had done it." Victor laughed at my indefinite ideas of Hilda's teachings, but he was interested, that was the main thing, and I read to him a long time; both of us giving our ideas how best to fulfill the precepts of our Lord. When I came to the Psalm, he gave me a more thorough explanation of it. "Hilda's idea of it is new to me," he said; "I like much that harmony between the beatitudes and the psalm; it is very striking."

"You have rather disturbed my ideas of rest, after my work," I said.

"*After* your work, dear sister, you can have it, but work ends only with life. This is not our Rest; we have 'green pastures and still waters' as oases in our journey. In the year we have been together, we have seen how changes come, how storms gather, and the dark death cloud settles on a home."

"Yes, dear Victor; but the Rest of love never fails."

"If you mean the Love that doeth all things well, I agree with you."

I fear I did not altogether mean that. Then I remembered the Grossmutter's message, and gave it to him. He supposed it came in a letter; a flush spread over his face.

“She is right. I mean to do better ;” his voice was hardly a whisper ; “but I am *so* tired and sleepy !” and my patient fell asleep, after a better fashion than he had slept for a long time.

I put my finger to my lips when Roland looked in, but would not move. Again and again he came to relieve me ; I pointed to my hand in Victor’s. I hoped so much from this sleep !

I was right. From that time there began a manifest improvement. After three hours he waked, and wanted dinner—ate it with a good appetite, and was more like himself than he had been for a long time. Mamma talked learnedly about the beneficial effects of sleep ; Hilda agreed with her ; while I kept to myself the healing balm of hope that I had poured upon his wounded spirit.

It was too cool for the garden in the evening ; we passed it in the long gallery, opposite Victor’s room, so that across the court he could hear our Sunday evening hymns.

The next day he was still better ; and the house was full of Roland’s boyish fun, even infecting Hilda with the universal joy. She failed, however, to comprehend the joke, when my husband, whose absurdity was chronic, exclaimed : “My soul claims leap-frog ; yes, Diana, nothing short of that will express my feelings !”

“What is that?” she asked; “is it one of those jumping reptiles?”

“No,” I returned; “it is when two idiots jump over each other’s heads.”

“Milly has never forgiven our want of dignity, when, by peering through forest leaves, she saw us personating those idiots,” he explained. “But it was ages ago—long before I was married. I have bitterly repented my folly since; Diana was very angry about it.”

Hilda looked rather puzzled; but a message from Victor, full of significance for me, made us forget everything else.

“Signor Victor wishes me to inform the Signora that he is dressed, and will soon be ready to be taken to the garden.”

“If one ray of hope did this—*one, Bel raggio*, what may we not expect?” I asked her.

I went at once to Victor. He was “waiting the commands of the princess,” he said; adding, “I have looked out on the court, Milly, and seen your decorations. You have imbibed the spirit of Rome, dear sister; you hold her mystic spells. Nothing of the architectural beauty is concealed, while you have revived the meaning of each column and springing arch. I will gladly trust my old home to your refitting; I know you will not modernize it.”

“Modernizing would be sacrilege. The only brush

I dare use to it is one dipped in nature's colors. I dearly love flowers ; and this year they have a song of joy that fills my heart with gladness. Now, will you come? There could not be a more delicious day to see the garden."

"And to hear good news—"

"Yes, to hear good news. See the transparency of that pale blue sky ; it does not seem to shut out Heaven, as it hangs over the court. It looks as if showers of good things could come through it. You remember our superb, deep blue skies? They look impenetrable, compared with this."

Whilst I kept him amused, Roland and Pietro were planning to carry him down-stairs. "Now, give me five minutes," I said, "and your chair will be ready for you, close by the Hadrian seat."

I hastened to Hilda, whom I had prepared. She and I wound down the private stairs from her room ; and I concealed her safely in a grove, before Victor reached the appointed place. I had not dared to allow her time for consideration. She asked no questions, but simply did whatever I proposed.

Leaving her, I went to the place of rendezvous, where mamma and Roland were congratulating our patient on his improvement ; they told me I was the best physician of all. Then, saying he must not talk to three at a time, they returned to the palace.

Then—while we were talking, we heard the sweet

notes of a zither, like a fountain of musical water drops.

Victor grasped my hand. "Only Hilda can play like that!"

I made no answer. The color rose to his cheek, the fire to his eyes; it was only a few moments, then the branches parted, and the fair young girl in all her loveliness, came towards us.

"*Mein Liebchen! Mein Herzchen!*" I heard him exclaim, as I turned and fled, casting no look behind me, though not too swiftly to lose the answer.

"*Mein Victor!* for you have conquered!"

No one witnessed the union of the lovers; no privilege of authorship admitted even me.

"The beating of their two hearts,
Was all the sound they heard."

THE END.

T I I E

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